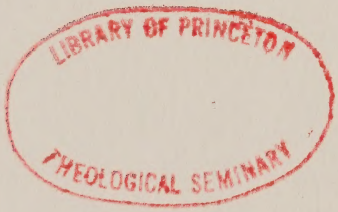


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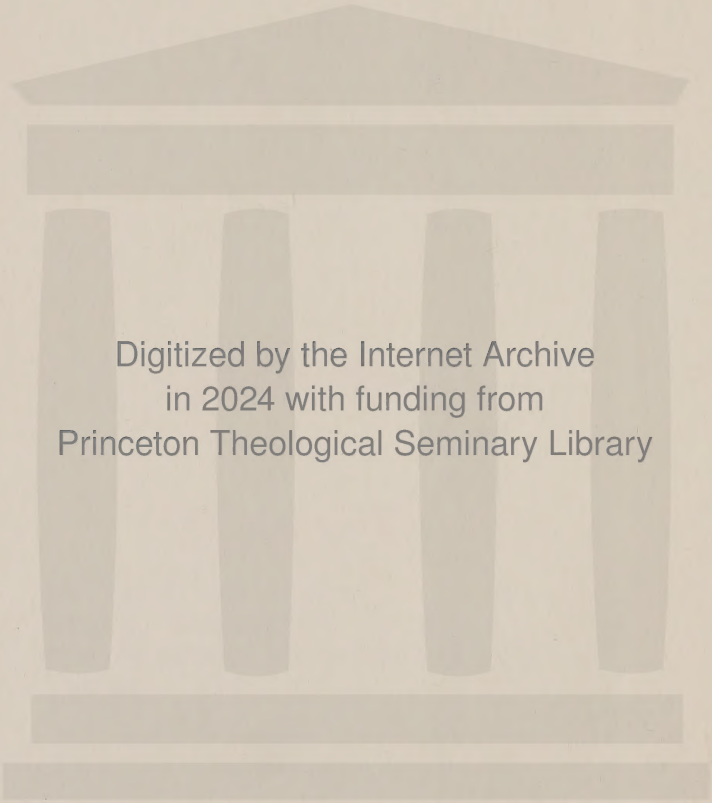

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# THE MEANING OF SUFFERING IN HUMAN LIFE

Works by the same Author.

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"How to Read the Prophets" (Five Parts).

"Joseph and Moses, the Founders of Israel."

"The Book of Job, and the Problem of Suffering."

*and*

"A Short Statement of the Christian Faith."

# The Meaning of Suffering in Human Life

BY THE

REV. BUCHANAN BLAKE, D.D.

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# PREFATORY NOTE

THE aim of this little volume is to perform what the author feels to be a duty laid upon him. He is conscious that while so many have most painful and severe sufferings these are not always clearly understood. In common experience such expressions as that suffering is a strange mystery, or the will of God to which submission should be at once given even though it be all strange and unaccountable, are continually met with. Such modes of speaking show clearly that the meaning of suffering has not been grasped in any effective way. And not unfrequently the sufferings of time are held to be so necessary that here no relief can be obtained, and that only in the fuller and perfect life of Heaven is any recompense to be secured for what men must suffer here. In view of this is it not the duty of all of us to make some strenuous endeavour to reach a solution of this age-long problem—this "riddle of the weary earth," as it has been called?

Under the obligation of this thought this volume has been issued, and it is hoped that the comfort obtained by the writer may be passed on to all who perchance may read its pages.

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# THE MEANING OF SUFFERING IN HUMAN LIFE

## CHAPTER I

### An Introduction to our Enquiry

The presence of suffering in human life, and especially the way in which it falls upon the lives of those who are pure and good and true, has in all ages been a challenge to thoughtful minds, and has caused a loud demand to be made for some full and adequate explanation of its meaning. It has so often seemed altogether a dark and unrelieved shadow cast upon the fair beauty of the universe of a God, Whom the heart of man must believe to be all loving and all powerful too. So long as it remains unexplained it is a problem which causes unrest and revolt, and so interferes with the full and happy discharge of the pressing duties of time.

The mind is so constituted that it asks with sincerity and reverence for an explanation of all the facts of life. It is rightly felt that an unexplained fact is only due to a state of ignorance, and the mind presses on towards the removal of all ignorance. This progress is specially necessary in regard to all religious experiences, and it is

particularly urgent where any of the facts of life, such as suffering, seems a menace to high truths commonly accepted.

The history of the world is the history of the way in which the mind has grappled with the difficulties and perplexities of the past. It records the never ceasing endeavours of the most earnest enquirers and their refusal to stay their search until they discover the hitherto hidden meaning of things, and compel them to yield up their secret. The men of to-day enjoy a wondrous understanding of a thousand things which were all dark and obscure in bygone days. Thus they have a vantage ground from which they can view all life, rid themselves from all absurd imaginings, and use to the full what aids nature provides in rich abundance on every hand.

Now, the problem of suffering meets us with its own pressing appeal that as an unsolved matter it should be dealt with. This appeal has often been heard in our world's story with its periods of terrible disaster and war. From such an acute time we are slowly emerging, and many have had recourse to strange methods of supposed communication with the dead to obtain some light and comforting. The only true and lasting consolation will come when we can pierce through the surrounding perplexities of such a problem, and in a clearer grasp and vision of the meaning of suffering find rest and calm.

All kinds of presupposition and prejudice have to be laid upon one side. The explanations of the past have to be carefully examined, and the reasons of their inadequacy discovered.

The enquiry before us has not only its bearing on our mental rest, but also on the furtherance of religion and its best presentation to our own age. Our discussion really involves the way in which we are to think of God, and to relate His ways of working to our ordinary experience. The very fact of suffering has been used by the opponents of religious belief in God. To them its mere presence is deemed a sufficient proof of the non-existence of God, or at least of our human inability to say anything with certainty about His Being, attributes, and ways of working. It is worthy of note that in saying so much of a negative sort the supporters of this way of thinking make so many assumptions about God and His attributes that their whole position becomes quite unreasonable. They would tell us that it is impossible to reconcile the permission of suffering with a God Who is both good and powerful. Here there is assumed a particular method of Divine working, for the thought of permission implies a possible prevention of the evils complained of, which would mean an interference with the freedom of man. It bids us think of a good God, but it is quite unable to define the way in which power and goodness may be related to one another, or what exactly each means. While professedly seeking to condemn all dogmatising, this view is essentially dogmatic, and in the most abstract and unsatisfactory manner possible.

All this shows how much requires to be done in a calm and thorough way to understand the words that are used. The old Socratic method has to be called in, and many questions have to be asked about goodness, power, permission, and so on.

Undoubtedly on the surface of things and at the first glance there may be sufficient ground for asking, even with a spirit of deep protest, "Why do the righteous suffer? Why should the lives of those who have been employed in loving and gentle ministries be so full of trouble, and exposed to the keenest forms of pain and sorrow?" It is easy to ask such a question, but it is not always so easy to exercise the patience necessary to obtain a complete answer, for this means long and elaborate enquiry.

The question, however, need not in any way be held to be asked in a wrong or irreverent spirit. It has to be asked in order to urge on the needful investigation. In the asking of the question there need be no revolt against the Order of things, or any passion of attack on God at all. A fundamental belief in the Moral Order of things, and a true belief in God, may lead to the question. For there may be a deep dissatisfaction with the views commonly held, and the demand for a better one. Thus there is shown a genuine desire to vindicate the ways of God in a more satisfying manner. Revolt against God and religion will only seriously appear when inadequate answers are given and insisted upon. If for one moment the thought is allowed to find a lodging in any mind that the asking of the question before us is to be condemned, only the most harmful results will follow. All eager and sympathetic efforts to meet the difficulties thereby expressed have proved of the highest benefit to vital religion and its interests. Apparent attacks have resulted in worthier means of defence. We therefore plead for the unfettered freedom of enquiry here, and are assured

that only the best consequences can follow upon a complete and sincere investigation into the meaning of suffering.

On the threshold of our enquiry we would press the importance of the whole matter being dealt with in the light of actual experience. Speculation concerning the origin of evil has proved vain and interminable. No satisfactory results have been reached, and the mind has been "in wandering mazes lost." The true and real answers for which we are in search will disclose themselves in the measure in which we come to know the world around us. The happenings of life are truly the manifestations of the Reality and Truth which lies in them. The more we know of life the more we will understand the truth, and by it we shall be made free from doubts and perplexities.

Our enquiry is not a sceptical one. Surely the writer of Job has been wrongly placed among the great Sceptics of the world. To our mind there is in his writing a grappling with the facts of life in a deep sincerity of spirit, and with a firm conviction that they could be explained in a satisfying way. There is, perhaps, in "the Voice from the Storm" an element of doubt about the powers of man, but this portion of the book is surely a later addition, and not by the writer of the Prologue. In the rest of his writings, especially in the speeches put into the mouth of Job, there is clearly a keen effort to reach a worthier view of God's relation to life than what had been given as yet.

In the course of our enquiry, then, the several and varied solutions of suffering which have been suggested will have to pass before our mind as in a moving

panorama on the stage. Indeed this is a most impressive spectacle. It calls forth our deepest sympathies, for we see the best attempts of each succeeding age being made to reach the true solution. And thus, as Browning has expressed it, "Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe." And he passes on. His failure appeals to us, and deepens the assurance that at length the answer will be forthcoming. Their work is ours. Hand in hand with them we go forward into the fuller light. Though elements of inadequacy meet us, each suggestion makes its own contribution to the final solution. Step by step the partial explanations are being surmounted, and the patient climbers of the Hills of God will bask at length in the effulgence of the eternal light.

What is of great interest to us to dwell upon is the fact that higher explanations of suffering have been called for in those supreme periods of history when, perhaps, the mystery of pain, in some of its severest forms, pressed in upon the mind and called for help.

Look at some of these momentous epochs. They were days when the old foundations seemed to be in danger of being destroyed. Men were then being driven in upon themselves to examine the essentials of their faith, and find some better and more lasting expression of them. There was a supreme spirit of unrest and questioning abroad, and many of the pious in the land were inclined to condemn the signs of the times in a spirit of despair. But brave souls were only called upon to buckle their armour the more tightly on, and undaunted to meet what seemed the foe in the gate.

Most notable among such periods was undoubtedly the time between the Captivity of the Jewish people and their Restoration. It was indeed a crisis time, and to that period the writer of the Book of Job probably belonged. Froude, indeed, has declared that such a time was "an ill occasion for searching into the broad questions of human destiny," but surely it was just at such a moment that men were searching thus, and demanding an answer. Some high-souled prophet, feeling that it was his peculiar function to tell forth to the men of his own generation what he believed to be the mind and will of God for them, a man touched by the spirit of Jeremiah, and upon whom, in the true succession of kindred sympathies, the mantles of Hosea and Jeremiah had fallen, would feel himself bound to speak. His would be the awakened ear in which God was whispering. To an ordinary observer the nation seemed dead as in the vision of "the valley of dry bones," but to the prophetic circle it was a sure conviction that soon the breath of God would come, which would cause these dead to rise and become a mighty army. Isaiah had taught that God was with Jerusalem, but only as they were a holy people. It became a central truth of the popular creed that God was with them in some abiding way, whatever their conduct might be. Against this serious error Jeremiah had loudly protested, when he showed how morality and religion were closely bound up together. He loved his nation, and was firmly convinced that to secure the abiding presence of God they would yet abandon their evil ways. This, however, they would not do. Hence he felt that some signal calamity would come upon

them. In those days each people had its own tribal deity; the God and the nation were inseparably bound up. Hence such a disaster as Jeremiah forecasted was an enigma. How could God cast off His people, they asked? They were the righteous nation. The nations round could only interpret the catastrophe as the punishment of their God for sin. Was that, however, the only meaning of suffering? Could it be explained in no other way? The prophets felt it could, and so we have the Book of Job and the teaching of the Second Isaiah.

It is indeed remarkable that the problem which was thus so acute among the Jews was also, at a time almost contemporary, causing much thought in India and in Greece. Hence we find the minds of the Buddha, and of the great Tragedians of Athens, being deeply exercised on this question, and giving their own solutions.

A similar condition of things was seen in the opening years of the Christian era. The world was weary and ill at ease. Again a time of unrest was apparent in every land then known. In Jerusalem a great catastrophe was near at hand. And just at that time Christ appeared with His teaching concerning suffering, and its meaning for Him in life and conduct. Old customs were passing away, and the beliefs associated with these and enshrined in them were being abandoned. Some interpretation of life was demanded, and it was being given.

Moving on into the days of the constant struggles of Pope and Emperor, known as those of Guelph and Ghibelline, in the early years of the fourteenth century,

we find a demand being made for a better presentation of the teaching of Christ than was being given by the Church. And at such an important crisis appeared Dante with his epoch-making *Commedia Divina*, in three parts, the Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise. In this work what was believed to be a worthy representation of the doctrine in regard to suffering was set forth. A special interest attaches itself to the part dealing with Purgatory, where a contribution is made to the solution of the problem of suffering. Dante tells us that he really "deals here with what good men always on the way to be better have gone through on the scene of life."

The period of the Reformation was one of much unsettlement, and again the demand was loudly voiced for a worthier teaching of the meaning of suffering than was supplied by the current preaching of the Church. More attention was, however, given to doctrine than to the pressing duties of life. In England, the Tragedies of Shakespeare and the *Paradise Lost* of Milton directed attention to the deep, underlying meanings of suffering. Bunyan, in his portraiture of Mansoul in the holy war, dealt with man in his actual living out of a true life. In Germany Goethe tackled the problem of suffering in a very serious way in his *Faust*. While in our more modern days the supreme sorrow which befel the poet Tennyson in the loss of his friend Hallam, to whom, for him there "was no second friend," led to the treatment of our problem of sorrow in his "In Memoriam." For while in the beginning dealing with what was a private and personal grief, he soon rose above that, and entered upon a discussion of the meaning of sorrow in the way

in which it affected the race. As Bradley has pointed out, he portrays "certain characteristics of the ideal humanity of the future."

What is of value for us to observe is that all these works deal with man as man, and not with him in any merely national or limited sense. Hence, as we look at them, we find solutions suggested which apply to the race. And they are such views as have been propounded by man for man, and have found representatives in every land. Doubtless the old view was that Job was a particular man, and his sore sufferings real in all their detail. Now while we admit that there was some sufferer of this name, we can easily see that the description of his calamities in their sudden and overwhelming magnitude was not meant to be actual, but dramatic. The intention was to give an illustration of the greatest possible suffering, so that it might in some way represent the worst condition which could come upon the righteous servant of God. What the writer thus desired to discuss was not some individual case, some one particular righteous man of the earlier days, but the servant of God, the nation to which he belonged. For them in the Captivity the question was acutely painful, and with that he dealt.

What this writer wished then to do was to supply an explanation of suffering that would be satisfying, and so bring comfort to sorely tried men. And this all the writers to whom reference has been made also eagerly purposed to do. All the narrow limits of person, time and place were transcended. A universal interest is evoked. And even though no satisfying explanation was provided at the first, either in Judea or elsewhere,

a torch was held out all alight to guide men on to the better day and the fuller truth.

And this is our aim too, for we have but recently passed through one of those tragic times, filled so full with suffering. We desire so much that we could comfort many hearts by leading them to see the inner meaning and significance that lies in suffering rightly understood. The last chapters of Isaiah's prophetic writings were written to give truest comfort to those who were in sadness hanging their harps on the willow trees of Babylon. So, too, was the apocalypse of Daniel, with its illustrations of suffering bravely endured, sent forth to those who were groaning under the oppressions of Antiochus. While, finally, the "Revelation" or Apocalypse of John was written amid the "great tribulation," to supply consolation to those brave men and women who were fighting the good fight of faith, and who were being crushed by Imperial Rome. They were assured that this second cruel and oppressive Babylon was soon to fall, and that they were in truth a crowned and praising throng, who could worship God that "sat on the throne, saying, Amen! Hallelujah!"

Plato, in well-known words, told of the way in which the good man in his, aye in all days, is bound to be treated, when he says, "The just man does no injustice, yet has the reputation of doing the greatest, and so, tortured for justice, nay, scourged, tormented, fettered, having his eyes burnt out, and lastly, having suffered all manner of evils, crucified. And all this suggests the question of questions, making us wonder, as if the gods gave to many good men misfortunes and

a wretched life, and to contrary persons a contrary experience."

The facts of life will come before us. We cannot ignore the sufferings of the good, but amid the rising billows, and in full view of the oppositions and persecutions of time, we will hear the Master saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

## CHAPTER II

### Suffering held to be the Punishment of Sin

The first view of suffering that falls to be discussed is that it is always the punishment of sin. This, indeed, may be regarded as the earliest, simplest, and most primitive explanation of the meaning of suffering in the life of man. Doubtless in the very beginnings of thought on this matter the actions of the powers above, or gods, were viewed as more or less arbitrary and capricious, but when some idea of government was seen in the ways of man, this idea had to be seen also in the relation existing between God and man. At first God was conceived of as a King, a mighty Potentate, with a kingdom of His own. In that kingdom He not only ruled by power, but with justice, in the interests of righteousness. Hence He must vindicate His rule by the punishment of all evil-doers and the reward of all that did well. His relation to man was one of a direct and immediate kind, so that all happiness in the world was regarded as the gift of God to the good, and all suffering, in the same way, definitely regarded as being sent by God to punish those that violated His laws.

This, we say, was the oldest view, and it has had its advocates all down the ages. It was the view of the Jews in the time of Christ, and is still finding, even in our own days, some support, for some afflicted ones are heard at times to say, "O why should I be punished

thus?" A great war like that through which we have lately passed has been spoken of as the punishment sent by the Almighty upon a disobedient nation or nations. It behoves us, therefore, to examine this view very closely, that so we may understand the reasons that have been adduced in its support, and which really account for the long and persistent way in which it has been held.

This view is, of course, that which the three friends of Job maintained so strenuously, for it was the orthodox and commonly accepted doctrine of their day. These three men who are called upon to speak were representatives of the best wisdom of their own time. The great and aggravated sufferings of Job, which are here set forth in the severest and most acute form, presented to these men a supreme problem. For Job was in their eyes a good man, and one held in high honour by all who knew him. On him there had suddenly come a terrible blow, and one that seemed altogether undeserved and unaccountable according to the current way of thinking. No wonder would have been expressed at the signal overthrow of some wicked tyrant, for then he would only have received a righteous punishment because of his deeds. But one like Job! That he should suffer, they could not understand.

And when he cursed the day of his birth and poured forth bitter words, he seemed to them to be arraigning not alone their common creed but the whole course of Divine Providence. The purpose of the writer in all this is abundantly clear. He wants the commonly accepted creed to be examined. His description of the

situation is a challenge. If it were the case that such a challenge could not be met, then indeed it would prove a menace to all true religion, and certainly threaten its overthrow. But just because the writer does not believe this to be the case, he makes Job utter his protest in the strongest possible terms.

A very painful element in the controversy between Job and his friends is introduced by the way in which they so stoutly defended the current view. For they indeed went the length of suggesting that there must be some evil in Job to bring about such a sad catastrophe. In himself they sought for the root of the matter. They pressed home the charge of some wrongdoing, only thereby intensifying the suffering and rousing in the breast of the sufferer an indignant protest. God, cried out the sufferer, knew all about his righteous way, and His strictest investigation would find no wrong in him; he was as purest gold. God was his friend and would be his Vindicator against every accusation unworthily made. "By its precipitate doctrine of retribution," says Wernle, "Judaism turned every calamity into a Divine judgment, thereby doubling the distress of the sufferer."

The deep consciousness of innocence on the part of the sufferer led in these circumstances to what appeared to be an attack upon God. This, of course, was very far from the mind of the writer. His aim was to get at a truer and worthier conception of God in His dealings with mankind. He was up against a distinct and definite interpretation of the way in which suffering came, or rather was sent, by God, and his inner conviction was that this was wholly inadequate to

explain the facts of life. He granted to the fullest extent the power, wisdom, and supremacy of the Almighty, but he was anxious to discover some satisfying explanation. It was not enough to be told that the penal view of suffering was accepted and based on the recognised tradition of the fathers. Their conclusions were based upon imperfect knowledge, and showed an unwillingness to face all the facts of life. Reason was only enslaving itself if it were to submit to a tradition which could not fully satisfy. The authority of tradition only prevails with those who accept its teaching, but it utterly fails in the case of those others who are finding ever new aspects of truth in the advancing and unfolding experiences of time. The meaning of tradition has been well dealt with by Goethe in the following lines. For this is what he truly said,

> "The ages that are past
> Are now a book with seven seals protected.
> What you the spirit of the ages call
> Is nothing but the spirit of you all."

The free spirit of man feels constrained to look at the experiences of its own new age in the light they bring, and continually refuses to accept the conclusions of the past, unless they are able to justify themselves to the mind and explain the present. It refuses to accept any mere *status quo*, or "attempt the future's portal with the past's blood-rusted key."

The doctrine that suffering was a punishment sent and inflicted by God was not only the accepted view of the friends in Job, but really the current and orthodox doctrine of the earliest Old Testament writers, and also of the ancient world.

In the prophetic writing dealing with the beginnings of the race we are distinctly told that all the troubles of mankind arose from the sin of disobedience to God on the part of man, which led to suffering coming by the way of punishment. "Cursed," so ran the primeval word, "is the ground for thy sake." Every form of sorrow and calamity is traced to sin. This is the theme which Milton took up and treated in his *Paradise Lost.*

> "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into our world and all our woe."

The main underlying thought was that all outward and physical loss was a punishment to be endured by man as a punishment of wrongdoing. All suffering was held to be penal. And an age-long conflict was foretold between the son of man and the serpent, until at length, through supreme suffering, the victory should be won by man. In the same way the favour and blessing of God were associated with the sending of good seasons, with fruitful fields and every kind of outward prosperity, to the doers of what was right and good in His sight. Hence, it was easy for the men of early days to see in the calamities that fell on Job a manifest token of the anger of God, and clearest proof that he was an evil-doer.

And the same teaching is found in the Book of Proverbs and in many of the Psalms. For example, we have such proverbial sayings as these:—

> "For the upright shall dwell in the land,
> And the perfect shall remain in it.
> But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth,
> And the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."
> (Ch. ii. 21, 22.)

"Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth;
Much more the wicked and the sinner." (Ch. xi. 31.)

"As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more;
But the righteous is an everlasting foundation."
(Ch. xx. 25.)

And in the Psalms we have the same teaching that favour is shown to the good, and trouble brought upon all evil-doers. In illustration, we may quote from Ps. xxxvii.:—

"The workers of iniquity
Shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb;
But those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth."

Such, also, is the teaching we find in early Greek literature. The good are wonderfully favoured, while every kind of trouble comes upon the wicked. In the "Iliad" we find these typical words—

"God looks down from Heav'n and punishes the doer of wrong."

The gods, we are told, "send the storm, the earthquake, and the tornado to execute their vengeance on those that break their laws." Prometheus was bound to the rock, and suffered intensely for calling in question the supreme authority of Zeus. Ajax was dashed to pieces for defying the gods, and Ulysses endured a nine years' exile from home, and was tossed about on stormy seas, for uttering a hasty word against a god. The firm inwrought conviction of those early days was clearly this, that sufferings came at the behest of the gods to punish men, so that the presence of trouble raised the suspicion that sin was also present as its cause.

But this was just what raised the objection of the speeches of Job. Over and over again he not only solemnly declared that his own sufferings could not be regarded as deserved punishment, but he urged his friends to look around, and told them that if they did so they would find thousands of cases of a similar nature to his own. Cases of suffering righteous men were to be found on every side. And what seemed a more serious defect in the position they took up was that evil-doers were not being punished in the way their theory demanded. They were compelled to admit that the wicked flourished and that the righteous suffered. For the agonised cry of perplexed and baffled men has often been heard. "O wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? O wherefore are they secure that deal very treacherously?" The tendency has ever been seen on the part of good men to "fret themselves" concerning the success of bad men. One psalmist sadly told of his own experience in these painful words, "But as for me, my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world! Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain!" (Ps. lxxiii.)

In view of the facts of life thus emphasized a modified form of the penal view of suffering was adopted by the friends of Job, and this found expression also in parts of the Old Testament and in other writings. It is now maintained that the sufferings of the righteous were only to be for a little time, and that the prosperity of the wicked would be short lived. "Weeping," it was held, "could only endure for a night, for joy would come

in the morning." But the suffering Job presses home the truth that even this modified form of the penal theory is not in agreement with the patent facts of life. The sufferings of the good are not always short lived, but remain with many all their days on earth. A Lazarus, who is ultimately carried to Abraham's bosom, lies in misery all his life, and many of the choicest of the saints of God have been in sorest plights even to their last breath. On the other hand many an evil-doer knows nothing of suffering at all. His life seems a triumphal procession to the grave, and the clods of the valley are pleasant unto him. His burial is a notable event, and his mausoleum the cynosure of every eye. Nothing that outwardly happens to him gives the beholder any hint that in any way the displeasure of God is resting upon him. It was very easy to meet the superficial remark of Zophar that "the joy of the wicked was short," with a long list of cases which prove the very opposite. "Why are the wicked," exclaims Job with a sense of shuddering, "allowed to live, grow old, and wax mighty in power?" And he asks again, "Have you never observed that the wicked are kept from disaster and delivered in the day of wrath?" On the view that suffering is penal no satisfactory answer can be given to such a question.

And yet the opinion was largely held that the prosperity of the wicked must be of short duration; that God must soon punish them. The following lines from a Greek poet express this view clearly:—

> "Yes, insolence, injustice, every crime,
> Rapine and wrong may prosper for a time,
> Yet shall they travel on to swift decay,
> Who tread the crooked path and hollow way."

And in the Psalms, which admit the prosperity of the wicked, the assurance is frequently expressed that evil-doers shall soon be cut off, "for yet a little while and the wicked shall not be, yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place and he shall not be found." And the psalmist gladly sings,

> "I have seen the wicked in great power,
> And spreading himself like a green bay tree,
> But I passed by, and lo! he was not;
> I sought him, and he could not be found."
> (Ps. xxxvii. 35.)

In Psalm lxxiii., where the psalmist is wrestling with the difficulty presented to his faith by the prosperity of the wicked, a solution is found in the suggestion that "they are set in slippery places," only to be cast down into destruction. "How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!" Habakkuk, the prophet, had gone up into his watch-tower in great perplexity, and the vision granted to him gave the assurance that the time of the overthrow of the wicked was at hand, for Yahveh, the righteous King, was in His Holy Temple. "Let all the earth," then, he urged, "keep silence before Him."

Still holding to the penal theory of suffering, it is suggested in the third speech of Zophar (ch. xxvii. 7) that the prosperity of the wicked is only in the outward appearance. Although they have all the external marks of success, they are yet miserable men, without any real enjoyment or any peace of conscience. They are haunted by fear; alarm and terrible coming doom give them no rest. And what hope have they when

they come to die? They shall yet be punished in the future, after death, not only in their own experience, but also in that of their children who survive them. The sins of the fathers fall upon their children. But to this idea of postponed punishment there is uttered a loud protest on behalf of the human spirit. For if God sends suffering by way of punishment, why should it not come at once upon the wrongdoer? Why should his guilt be stored up so that the penalty should fall upon his innocent posterity? And the prophet Ezekiel joined in this protest when he said that the people were saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, therefore the children's teeth are set on edge." This proverb, he strongly urges, must no more be used in Israel, for "the soul that sinneth, it shall die, and the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Thus the prophet voices the feeling that while children do suffer because of the wrongdoing of their fathers, even "to the third and fourth generation," the idea of this being a visiting of them in punishment must be abandoned.

Nothing that can be said in support of the penal view of suffering receives any approval from Job in his days. On the contrary, a holding to it in any form whatsoever only made the situation more difficult and painful for the conscientious sufferer. What is called by Professor M'Fadyen the last "clash between Job and Zophar," is full of deepest pathos. No superficial question is at issue, but really one that touched the very centre of things. Was this the last word that the friends, the representatives of the truth, had to offer? If so, then Job makes his appeal, with all its eager

urgency, go beyond them, right up to God. He was waiting for a fuller and better explanation of suffering than was as yet supplied to him.

The view that the national catastrophe which was about to fall upon Jerusalem was to be the result of national sin, was clearly set forth by the prophet Jeremiah. He saw that the "fierce anger of the Lord was resting upon His people." And he represents God as saying, in full sense of their evil doings, "Shall I not visit them for these things; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" And when the dread punishment came, and was being endured for more than a generation, the prophet of the Restoration was convinced that surely now the punishment was equal to the sin that had been committed, that the one was the equivalent or the double of the other, on the supposition that the punishment could be fitted to the crime, and that when a definite time of suffering has been endured the evil was wiped out. Hence we find the prophet exclaiming in his words of comfort to the captive people, "Your appointed time is accomplished; your iniquity is pardoned; for ye have received of the Lord's hands the double for all your sins." The sin had been definite, and it had been visited with a punishment equally definite. Now, then, a new beginning could be made, for the old page could be turned over and a fresh one opened up. There is here no doubt the presence of the legal idea. There is no suggestion that the evil has been eradicated; it has simply been punished. In this way the punitive or penal theory of suffering is again illustrated.

Having thus dealt with the penal view of suffering

as it was presented to mankind in these early days, and seen its unsatisfying character, we have now to consider the grounds upon which it has to be abandoned. But before doing this, we find ourselves up against the strange persistency with which this old view has been maintained, for even in our own days men speak about the punitive nature of suffering, and express their belief in the value of pain brought about by punishment.

It is noteworthy that this penal view of suffering was prevalent among the Jews in the time of our Lord. In proof of this we have two outstanding illustrations. The first is found in St. Luke's gospel (ch. xiii). Those "Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices," and "those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell," were popularly deemed to be "sinners above all men in Jerusalem because they suffered these things." These definite calamities were supposed to be sent as punishment to these persons because of their sin. Christ immediately points out the error involved in this way of thinking. There were obviously many other sinners in Jerusalem at that time, and there was no evidence that the sufferers in these calamities were worse than they. Nay, doubtless, many innocent ones suffered, and many guilty ones escaped. Hence the tracing of such disasters to the sin of particular persons was wholly unjustifiable. In each case the cause of the disaster had to be discovered; it was not an illustration in the eyes of Christ of a penal visitation. The facts of the incidence of suffering require most careful examination, so that all the circumstances may be fully known and understood.

A wholesale or mass judgment must be avoided. Deep down in the human breast lies the conviction, long ago expressed by father Abraham, when he said, "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked—that be far from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the second illustration of the popular Jewish view is found in St. John (ch. ix.). "Master!" asked the Jews, "who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" The loss of sight was viewed as a punishment for sin. And in answer, Jesus said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents." He, indeed, suggested another explanation, but He most certainly condemned the current view. He would clearly have men abandon the explaining of war, plague or calamity of any kind by saying that these things are a judgment of Almighty God. In whatever way they are to be explained, and this we shall have to do, this cannot be done by the penal theory.

This continued acceptance of the penal theory is, however, to be mainly accounted for by the fact that it contains a half truth, and whatever does this persists in a wonderful way. When we deal with the view that suffering is a punishment of wrongdoing, we are met with the fact that some suffering undoubtedly comes by way of the result of wrongdoing, and so may be regarded as punishment. In a moral universe there must be some relation of the most essential kind between evil and its consequences, and in these the penalty of wrong is to be found. It is not possible, however, always to connect any actual suffering so

closely with a wrong act or a course of wrongdoing that we may definitely say that it is the direct result thereof. Sometimes, of course, a wrongdoer is caught in his act, and direct suffering is inflicted upon him by way of punishment in the interests of society. But just because this is not always the case, and the innocent are often made to suffer, there are no grounds sufficient to warrant the finding in the presence of suffering any universal law either applicable to the action of man, or to that of God. The danger of the half truth is here seen. It is made to do service for the whole truth, and so the erroneous view that suffering was always the punishment of sin has so much prevailed. These considerations show the need that exists for a wider and a fuller analysis of the relations existing between the actions of life and the experience of suffering.

Principal Denney in his last work on the subject of Reconciliation, has emphasized the importance of the reaction of wrongdoing being clearly recognised, in order that the offender may feel that he is rightfully suffering. Only in this way can his conscience be enlisted on the right side, and a chance of amelioration afforded. He says "Ordinary legal punishments—the sentence of criminal courts—do little good to the criminals, not because they are purely retributive, but because they are hardly retributive at all." Basing itself on the idea that God punishes sin by suffering, our modern jurisprudence has displayed a desire, as it says, to fit the punishment to the offence charged, and hence there has been drawn up a schedule of offences and sentences. The task undertaken has been an impossible one, and the result has been that the sentences are

largely arbitrary. For how, indeed, can guilt be ascertained or measured in the varying circumstances of character and condition? Each individual case requires to be dealt with on its own merits. It must be carefully investigated, and the method of treatment to be adopted chosen only on the highest grounds of what will be of advantage to the individual, as well as to the community.

We would now take up consideration of the erroneous conceptions of the nature of God and of His relation to the world and His way of working therein, which were essentially involved in the penal theory of punishment. Most of these were characteristic of early days, and have been surmounted only by advancing knowledge. But many of them pass away very slowly, for traces of them are still found in our common expressions. Sometimes these express the actual belief of those who use them, but they are not uncommonly used by those whose thought has gone beyond them. Such, however, is the force of popular speech.

In the olden days God was thought of in an anthropomorphic way. The Divine was largely the human raised to its highest powers. And so it has been said that while God made man in His own image, man had been making God in the image of man. Doubtless there was a process of revelation by which God was making Himself known in human experience, but there was also a process of discovery on the part of man whereby he came to know God better. This knowledge had to find expression in human language.

The simplest form of the State, or ordered community, implied a king at its head. The power and authority

associated with the father or head of the family (the *patria potestas*) was vested in God, the supreme King of men. He was possessed of almighty power, and this was His supreme attribute at first. By His power all things came into being, and by that same mighty power they continued to be. He was the Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge of men. The laws of the world were His laws, and beyond these there was no appeal. He was held to do according to His will "in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" No doubt, it is true, that in Greek literature there was a Fate which was supposed to be above the gods, to which they were subordinate, but in course of time all that was involved in the idea of Fate was identified with the Supreme God.

And according to the old geocentric conception of the universe God dwelt in the canopy stretched over and above the earth. Until the Copernican theory revolutionised all thought concerning the earth, it was held to be a flat surface and the centre of the universe. The sun and moon in their daily course rose and set. Thus the psalmist sings of the sun in the morning "coming out of his chamber as a bridegroom, and rejoicing as a strong man to run his race." There were chambers in the North and the South, and high over all the Almighty sat upon His glorious throne, or moved upon the expanse of the heavens, surrounded by the sons of God, or the angels who were His ministering servants. All that happened was traced directly to the operation of God. He was the sender of good and evil, the dispenser of justice, rewarding the good

and punishing the bad. He was at first supposed in this way to intervene or interpose. There were no second causes through which He worked. His working was immediate and direct. Not yet had the mind discovered the methods of uniformity in the ways of the Divine operations, or learned to speak of these as the Laws of Nature. The extraordinary or the miraculous was the way of the Divine working, and it was the expectation of the pious that in some sudden and apocalyptic way God would intervene to protect or deliver His people, or to punish the wicked. "The unusual was the significant." When things went well there would be nothing said about the presence or working of God, but when trouble came the voice of complaint would be heard, and men expected God by direct intervention to do something great for them. Thus God became a *deus ex machina*, a trouble ender or a food supplier, a God of the emergency and not of the regular ordering of all things. All things were sent or permitted by God, and thus He was ultimately responsible for all that took place. He could be blamed by man for all the conditions by which man is here surrounded, the snare and trap for which man's forgiveness should be given to God.

There was thus no realm of law and order, such as that to which modern science has been accustoming our mind. When nature was an unexplored territory, a *terra incognita*, all the unknown was taken for the splendid. The primitive mind saw God in the wind and fire, the fountain and the stream, the storm and the earthquake. The complete ignorance of the movements of the heavenly bodies allowed men to stand in fear at the

sight of an eclipse, and to see some manifestation of the Divine in any unusual happening, some sign of the good-will or anger of the gods.

For, as we have said, power was regarded as the chief attribute of God. In the first instance it would be the power of might, of capacity to do anything or everything with undisputed authority, that was held to be the Divine. Actions of highest power were ascribed to God. Before Him men were as nothing. "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. He bloweth upon them and they wither and the whirlwind taketh them away as stubble. For that He is strong in might not one is lacking." Later the Divine power is seen in that of reason, the all persuasive power of understanding and will. The final expression of the might and power of God is in the supreme Will, which orders all things.

Thus power and Godship are one and the same; the Divine is the irresistible will of God, that Will that must be supreme over all. And who can withstand that Will? It must be done. The natural tendency of the mind in past ages, nay, even in our modern times, has been to deify power, and yet when we come to think about power in relation to man, does not Browning rightly tell us that when we speak of power that it is

"Just the main assumption reason most revolts at—power?"

And in his "Ixion" he satirises the idea of power, and on the assumption that power and godship are equivalent terms he makes Ixion say,

"Zeus! Keep thy godship and sink."

But, after all, the best in man is not power, either physical or mental. His best lies in the qualities of love and compassion. And the mind must go on to think of the Divine in the terms of this best, and this, too, in its highest form. The human spirit feels itself endowed with freedom and responsibility, and while recognising the Divine as absolutely supreme, it refuses to believe that God can by force coerce the human spirit. Man demands that God must influence him not by power but by love, not by brute force, not even by the apparent irresistible power of His wisdom and His Will, but much rather and more truly by the greatest power conceivable, even the power of love, which has its own sweet and gracious way of working, for it breaks open no human heart, crushes no human will, but waits and knocks, presenting itself in the most endearing and winsome ways, until the glad consent of the heart is obtained, and then only enters to reign in the happy sphere of a mind and will surrendered to that which is recognised to be the best.

> "He drew me and I followed on,
> Charmed to confess the Voice Divine."

The old ideas of an absolute, transcendent, all-powerful God are being surmounted, and a God of grace is being believed in. He is seen in the full revelation of Jesus Christ to be Spirit, Who is an ever present and loving Father. Thus freedom, which is recognised as man's highest prerogative, is conserved—that freedom of which Dante sings—

> "The greatest gift that in His giving God
> Creating made, and unto His own goodness
> Nearest conformed, and that which He doth prize
> Most highly is the freedom of the will."

And we may again quote from Browning, when he speaks of man so made as

> " Able to grieve Him,
> But able to glorify Him too,
> As a machine could never do."

Hence, in the truest sense, it can be said with Tennyson,

> " Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

In the acceptance of the Divine Will man finds the realisation of his own best and highest freedom.

It is important to bear in mind that the truth is not fully set forth in the well-known lines of Browning in " Pippa Passes."

> " His presence fills
> Our earth, each only as God wills
> Can work—God's puppets, best and worst are we."

The presence and the aids of God are available in the same measure for all, but the desire and capacity for receiving them are so different in individuals. Were we all more willing to receive, oh how much the more would we receive! Man is more than a puppet.

And now we come to deal finally with what appears to us the chief and most fatal defect in the penal theory of suffering. This is the way in which it represents God in His treatment of mankind. It applies the category of punishment to the action of the Divine in human life, but this is very far from being a conception in harmony with what we have just been saying about the Divine. The penal theory implies that God vindicates His just rule by inflicting suffering on men. Surely a very much higher thought of God would be to

regard Him as being far more concerned with the saving and amelioration of the offender, than with the imposing of a penalty. For this is something done and done with. At first there was a crude idea of the wrath of God, but this was given up in the progressive revelation of God made in the Old Testament. In the story of Moses, for example (Exodus xxxi. 10), God is represented as moved by wrath against the people for their great apostasy, but the Divine attitude appears sooner in a far more gracious way, when God is better understood, and seen to be the "Lord, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." The prophets developed this aspect of God, emphasizing the thought that He was ever "waiting to be gracious." Jonah was the type of the Jewish people in their antagonism to the other nations, and in their refusal of the high calling of God that they should be a witness of Him. "Therefore," he said, "I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the trouble." The heart of God was filled with joy when Nineveh, the great enemy of the Jews, repented, and Jonah was rebuked for being angry. It was felt that "judgment was God's strange work," and that He delighted in mercy, so that His chief concern was "to devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him." Thus the truer view of God came to be held that He was ever moved by love, and not by wrath, to eradicate the evil and to implant the good, so that with deep concern for the well-being of man all Divine

resources were being continually used to bring about a genuine repentance which would result in a real reformation of life. It has been well said that "one moment of the fire of love can do more to satisfy God and burn out evil than half an eternity of penances." "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4). A moral result must have a moral cause, and out of love all good issues spring. Hence "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The old idea that associated suffering with the direct act of God is seen in such words as affliction and inflicted, which we still commonly use. The suffering was traced to a blow of God; it was something sent by Him. In the sublime picture of the suffering saint given to us in Isa. liii. 4, we have these words, "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." And the prophet continues, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief." Now, such a way of speaking seems contrary to the whole attitude we are taught to assume towards God. For He sendeth no trouble upon the children of men, but from Him "cometh every good gift and every perfect giving." (James i. 17.)

The aim and purpose of God can never be a merely negative vindication of Himself or of the Law of holiness; it must be essentially positive, and continually moving dynamically in that direction. A fuller knowledge of the causes of the happenings of time will show us those which are at work in each case of suffering, and the circumstances in which trouble

comes about. But at all costs, in order to have a worthy idea of God, we must trace not the evils of life to the Divine working, but much rather all those loving and benign influences which are constantly manifesting themselves for the healing and succour of mankind. And Ruskin beautifully and impressively reinforces this appeal when he writes:—"If, in fine, instead of assuming the Being of an awful Deity, which men, though they cannot and dare not deny, are always unwilling, sometimes unable to conceive, we were to show them a near, visible, inevitable, but all-beneficent Deity, whose presence makes the earth itself a heaven, I think there would be fewer deaf children sitting in the market-place."

There is no doubt that harm has come to our views of God from the too hasty adoption of a legal or juristic principle, and its application to His method of government, for in consequence of this the moral and spiritual aspects of the Divine rule, which are ever of far higher importance, have been overshadowed, if not altogether ignored. For example, the legal category of satisfaction has been introduced. A fictitious personality has been attributed to the law itself, and it has been said to require satisfaction. By the punishment of the wrongdoer the law and the community have been supposed to be satisfied, but is there not something far higher than what is meant by a legal satisfaction? Is there not the glad satisfaction of the heart? And, truly, the heart can never be satisfied unless the offender ceases from his evil ways and becomes a good man. If with reverence we speak of the satisfaction of the Divine heart, is not that found

when the lost and erring one is brought home and restored to well-doing? Verily, in such a case, there is joy in heaven.

We have to be thankful that there has been great progress in jurisprudence. Maine has pointed out that the earliest forms of criminal legislation were marked by severity, inconsistency, and a belief in the supposed justice of the "lex talionis." No obligation was laid on the State to remove the causes of wrong-doing and secure the restoration of the offender. This is now being realised in larger measure, for it is recognised that punishment alone serves no abiding purpose. Some method of dealing with first offenders so as to eliminate the growth of a law-breaking spirit, and of perpetual detention for habitual wrong-doers, is urgently required.

The method of dealing with an offence by means of punishment proceeds on the supposition that the offender is blameworthy, but a fuller knowledge of life proves abundantly that many offenders are more sinned against than sinning. They have been born and cradled in conditions which could only issue in crime, and it is wholly impossible to assess the amount of culpability in any particular case. "If," to quote from Froude in his essay on Spinoza, "if we trace a sinner's history to the bottom, the guilt attributable to himself appears to vanish altogether."

For all recognise that force is no remedy. It never can secure a moral result. "No brute force like punishment of bad by worse," says Browning, "can ever accomplish moral ends, or gain the approval of the mind." In the story of the plagues in Egypt we have

abundant proof of the fact that no such punishment can attain the end desired. The cessation of each plague was accompanied by a new hardening of his heart by the Pharaoh. War is the use of force on the largest scale. "It makes a desert and calls it peace." The conqueror by force is constantly baffled and disappointed. For the moment all opposition is crushed, but no good-will is secured.

But, truly viewed, the punishment of wrong-doing is never external; it is inward and moral. The outward penalty imposed really adds nothing to the pain of remorse, which burns itself deeper than any outward mark can ever do. The punishment is not the deterrent. This, wherever it is found, is within the soul. Where this is wanting, nothing of outward indignity can prevent repetition of the wrong. The wrong-doer sins against himself when he sins against society, and his true and better self exacts from him far greater suffering than society ever can. The strange power within "is ever pressing the offending soul to the sternest and most awful acts of self-judgment." When such an inward reaction has done its work, the healing hand of love must begin its redemptive function. If the wrong-doer is ever again to resume any place of worth in life, reliance must be reposed upon a consistent and persistent ameliorative process. With that God, we are sure, is concerned, and with that, in line with Him, society should continually move on its forward way.

For its inadequacy to explain the facts of life on which the speeches in Job dwell and for its imperfect conceptions of the Divine, the penal theory of suffering must be abandoned.

## CHAPTER III

### Suffering held to be a Test of Fidelity

The first and oldest view held with regard to suffering, that it was a punishment sent by God on account of sin, engaged our attention in our last chapter, and we saw the grounds on which it had to be given up. It by no means satisfied the mind, for it failed to explain in any adequate way the facts of life, or to supply a worthy conception of the nature or working of God. While some suffering was clearly the result of wrong-doing, and brought upon the offender the necessary consequence or reaction of the laws of God when they were broken or violated, it was clearly manifest that there were many evil-doers who were not punished, and many innocent ones whose sufferings were sore. In these circumstances it could not be any longer maintained that suffering was a punishment sent upon wrong-doers alone. It did not explain the situation. Another explanation was, therefore, sought, for the question was an acute and pressing one at the time.

The people of Jerusalem had been carried into a sore captivity, and yet were held to be a covenanted nation, a people specially chosen by God to bear witness to Him among the other nations. Theirs was the "adoption and the Shekinah glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law and the Temple service, and the promises." To them the prophets had spoken, and with

them holiest traditions remained. Their great prophet, Isaiah, had described them as a vineyard of God, in every way highly favoured, and in the day of their deliverance from the army of Sennacherib he had assured them of the Divine interest and protection. But now, wholly unexpectedly, there seemed to be a withdrawal of all this Divine help and favour. Their case seemed desperate, and their heart searchings were many and deep. They were sorrowfully saying, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God." Here are sad words indeed—

> "Judah is gone into captivity to suffer grief and bondage sore.
> She dwells amid a people strange, and finds no rest at all.
> From Zion's daughter all her glory is departed far."

What, they asked, was the cause of all this? How can it be possibly explained? No, not by way of punishment can it be, for all the former relations continue as of old. Some comfort is needed in this hour of distress. Hence the prophetic writer of the Prologue to the Book of Job assays the task, and seeks to supply the consolation that is needed by his explanation that the calamity under which they are groaning is sent by God to test their virtue and fidelity, in the full assurance that they will emerge from the hottest fires as still the people of God.

The whole matter is treated by being transferred to one individual person, and thus a deep interest is evoked. Job, who is a righteous man and a true servant of God, becomes the representative of the people, and the way in which he is being dealt with by God is held to be the way in which they are. Like

them, he had once enjoyed great prosperity and happiness. His skies were blue, and no dark cloud hung upon his horizon. All around him there was as it were the paradise of God. Every eye that saw him blessed him. And his were the very highest virtues, all those excellences of character that the time demanded. In him the ideal of the good man was fully embodied. But in a moment all his outward prosperity vanished. His fields and possessions were destroyed. His sons, in whom he rejoiced, were cut off before his eyes. In his own body he suffered a loathsome disease with excruciating pain. There was in himself no wrong-doing to account for such a dread catastrophe. He had always recognised God and the claims of religion. We have a great oath of clearing uttered by Job, and we are made to feel that in this man, with all his goodness and sincerity, no fault was to be found. Thus he stands before us as the type of a righteous individual, or nation, who is altogether innocent, and yet is a supreme sufferer. What is the explanation of this?

And our writer makes us feel that God in heaven, just as much as men on earth, has an interest in answering this question in some way that truest comfort may be provided. It is not a matter of indifference to the heavenly Father that any of His children should be perplexed by the happenings of their life. Good men hasten to explain, and in their explanations, in ever fuller measure, God reveals Himself. The writer of the Prologue, had certainly some contribution to make to the better understanding of life, and in that degree some consolation to bring to troubled and distraught men.

We may ultimately find that his explanation does not satisfy us, but we can in no way depreciate the value of his message to his own days.

Let us look at the way in which our writer deals with the problem of suffering, and the way in which he explains it.

The question is put dramatically to one of the angels in the heavenly Council, who is not perhaps an accusing one, but at this point held to be an examining counsel. "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" And the answer raises the whole question, not of Job's reputed goodness, but of his motive for being good. It is suggested that Job was in no way a truly disinterested follower of God and the good. In other words it is urged that Job has espoused the cause of virtue and religion because it pays. His had been great prosperity. The Divine favour had been largely bestowed upon him. Let all this cease, it is urged, and then it will be seen whether Job is really sincere in his goodness or not. Men who make a high profession of goodness are of necessity exposed to such a criticism as this answer suggests. Unfortunately too many have embraced the true faith, and apparently taken their side with those who have contended for highest ideals, because it was fashionable so to do. As long as it paid them to be good they adhered to the good, but when place or circumstance changed they showed that they had never been sincere in their profession by at once changing sides. It is sometimes said that it is the cynic, the man who believes in no real virtue on the part of anyone,

who raises the question here. But, on the contrary, it may be rather held that there is no cynicism or indifference shown at all. The question had to be raised and disposed of, just because of the fact that the mere appearance of goodness and a high reputation for its possession was never enough. Thus a high service was done to morality, and quite the opposite of a hostile act, when the claims of a man alleged to be good were examined and fully tested.

If goodness were sincere, and sprang out of the pure love of goodness for its own sake, and was thus wholly independent of any reward, it had to be proved beyond all question that the good man would be good, not only in favourable circumstances, but also in those which were most adverse and filled with every kind of misery. If the blessedness of goodness lay in itself alone, whatever might be the consequences, then this had to be shown in such a way as would put all gainsayers into confusion. And certainly it was of highest worth that the test should be shown at work in life continually, and in all true cases crowned with success. "That were a poor patriot who served his country for the hire his country would give him." If men were only virtuous and religious because they were assured of reward, either in this life or in that which is to come, the very essence of both religion and virtue would be removed.

If it was believed among the nations that Israel's adhesion to the worship of the one true God was due entirely to the prosperity they enjoyed, then this must be demonstrated at any cost to be untrue. The people must be carried into captivity, not by way of punish-

ment, but to prove that, whatever happened to them, the faith at least of the true kernel of the nation would remain unchanged, and amid, and in spite of the hottest fires only shine out the more brightly. The world must have some clear and indisputable demonstration of the disinterestedness of virtue.

Now, some writers, and among them notably Froude in his essay on Job, have come to the conclusion that the meaning of suffering supplied in the Book of Job is to be found in the Prologue, and they therefore hold that this is the supreme teaching of the book. We are quite ready to find here one solution of the problem before us, and to recognise the comfort it must have brought to many in days of trial.

In the Book of Daniel, which was also written in a time of great suffering in the days of the Maccabees, to bring consolation to the hearts of the tried and the afflicted, we have outstanding illustrations of the way in which the true servants of God were carried through their sorest dangers. The stories of Daniel in the lions' den and of the three brave young men in the sevenfold heated furnace are well known. The words of these men are specially to be noted. They, indeed, expected deliverance in the hour of danger, but they gave utterance to the splendid declaration that even "if their God did not deliver them," they were fully determined to refuse obedience to the king's command. They would not be disloyal to God and conscience, even if they should die. And in every age the martyr host, in Roman amphitheatres, or in times of bloody persecution, continued faithful even unto death. Thus Job refused to curse God and die.

In passing, we must remark on the sublime boldness of the writer in giving us his own solution of the problem of the time under the symbolism of a Divine Council. What he thinks and says, he bids us regard as the thoughts and words of the Almighty. This, indeed, is the method adopted by all the prophetic writers, for what they utter in the name of God they introduce to us as a "Thus saith the Lord." Very strikingly, in a highly dramatic way, the Voice from the Storm is spoken of as the Voice of God. Most certainly we welcome all such words as steps and stages in an ever progressive revelation, but we cannot be bound by them in any final manner. They have, indeed, each their own contribution to give, but in the further light vouchsafed their insufficiencies are seen. They are after all but man's best attempt to express what they have received from the light that enlighteneth all.

Two other points may be noticed. While clearly there is no indication of approval of the view of the friends, and something of a positive contribution such as the speeches of Job do not furnish, there is still the idea that God sends trouble upon man for His own wise ends. There is not yet the knowledge that every trouble has its own distinct cause and origin in the circumstances of life. Hence, in common with the thought of that day, and of many still, God is the supreme permitter and sender of trouble. This, as we have already pointed out, rests on a wrong conception of the Divine way of working. But, secondly, we note that some progress is being made towards the more modern view that in the sending of trouble the sending is not a direct act of God. It is sent through an

intermediary. In the time of Christ, the presence of diseases of all kinds was traced in popular belief to evil spirits or demons, and not to God. "Let no man say when he is tried, I am tried of God," writes the apostle James, and no suffering saint should think of what he endures as a visitation or dispensation sent upon him by the Almighty.

We would now proceed to deal with the solution suggested in the Prologue, in regard to its adequacy to explain the sufferings of the present time.

Froude, as we have said, was so impressed with the worth of the solution suggested in the Prologue, that he exclaimed, "where can we find a grander solution?" It is certainly an advance upon the primitive theory that all suffering is the punishment of wrong-doing, but when we look more closely into the suggested explanation, its inadequacy will soon become clear to our mind, and the need for something more satisfying will be the more urgently demanded.

The teaching here expressed is that suffering is sent to supply a demonstration to the world of the staying power of goodness, and to prove to all that true virtue never is the result of present or hoped for prosperity. Now, it may be asked, was this at all necessary? Were there not illustrations on every side of the great truth emphasised? Would one more example in any way convince those who were denying, or ignoring it? To the writer the very thought of the possibility of the contrary being proved, was obviously obnoxious. It involved a challenge which must at once be put to the issue, and that in full confidence. It is his distinct conviction that the whole worth of morality and

religion, all moral values, indeed, would fall to the ground if by any chance the intrinsic nature of goodness was not fully admitted. But what was his conviction was also that of all competent observers of life. Could it, therefore, be maintained that it was needful to plunge Judah, or any individual, into terrible suffering to test their staying power?

We have recognised that the effort to assure Judah that no harm would come to them by their being thus treated would make them in a measure comforted, and yet we can imagine them saying, O why should this trial be sent to us, and not to others also? In answer it might be said, O yes, you are God's people, you are His servant, accepted and righteous in His sight. These sad calamities which have befallen you can in no way touch or alter these high relations and privileges. Your position in the past, in the beginning of your history, and your position now, in no way depended, or depends, on what you were or what you had. Yours were no merit, no land, no temple, when you were first chosen of God. His choice of you, consequently, will not be affected by what you suffer, and the presence of His Holy Spirit in your midst will not be removed thereby. Your true life does not consist in what you have; though you lose every outward thing, you still have truest blessedness. Your sufferings may be the greatest possible, but your goodness, which is your most valuable asset, will remain with you always. Your sufferings will, notwithstanding all that your enemies may say to the contrary, abundantly prove that you are God's people still. They will show how you will pass through them all in a brave, heroic, and

triumphant spirit, unmoved and unmurmuring. Thus view your sufferings. Feel that they have been sent for highest and wisest reasons, and that if you remain faithful like Job, as assuredly you will do, yours will be a splendid restoration to the enjoyment of your privileges, as in the former days.

It will be seen that the emphasis falls here upon a right attitude to God in all that happens, and that the testing trial is by no means necessary. There is no answer to the question already referred to as to why this test should be applied to some and not to all. Why should only some be thus dealt with? If all were dealt with in this way, and if every suffering could be traced to this same purpose of a test, no complaint might be uttered, but, when this method is supposed to be used in the case of the few an appearance of what is wholly arbitrary is seen, and this is always contrary to a worthy conception of the Divine.

The theory also fails to satisfy for other reasons. The suffering sent seems to have no relation to the life and character of the individual. It does not come for his sake, or for any purpose in the shaping or improving of his life. All comes about for the sake of God, to serve some supreme purpose in the Divine economy. This so lies outside the thought of the individual that he cannot see the reason of it at all. The sufferer who feels himself a being possessed of freedom and responsibility cannot bear the thought that he is merely an instrument in the hands of God. The moral worth of the whole proceeding does not appear. Man lies passive, and finds himself quite unable to explain the situation, save by some general formula not particularly

applicable to himself. All that can be said is that this is the Will of God. But unless he sees how it is, it cannot satisfy his heart. If he is to find rest, he must feel himself concerned in the matter. What serves only a purpose outside of himself does not justify its necessity to him. Doubtless, the Will of God is the highest and the best for him and the world, but he must realise and approve the meaning of this Will if he is to accept it in peace and gladness. His consent must be gained to the method and purpose of the Will of God. When this is obtained, he will run with alacrity in the ways of God.

Another point deserving of attention is that this view does not give any meaning of the worth and value of suffering in human life. The conviction is deep and true that all suffering must have its own meaning, and, consequently, its worth and value in an ordered universe. Every part of it must be related to its causal antecedents, and so explained in connection with them. It cannot be looked upon as something detached from the ordinary happenings of life, or as lifted out from its surroundings. So unsatisfactory was this theory that Elihu and others propounded the view that suffering surely must tend to the betterment of the man to whom, in a wise purpose, it is sent. To this explanation our attention will, in the next chapter, be directed; meanwhile, we just refer to it as an indication that the solution of the Prologue, that suffering is merely a test, does not go far enough. It does not satisfy.

Again, there is the thought that while testing may have a place in life in chemical analysis, it is to find out the elements present in any matter tested, or, as in the

testing of the precious metals, to free them by the hottest fires from the alloy which may accompany them in their natural condition. "Thou, O God, hast proved us! Thou hast tried us as silver is tried" (Ps. lxvi. 10). We have to be careful in the use we make of the illustration of testing. The use of the process of testing requires definition.

The theory before us at this stage does not use testing in either of the above senses, but in this special sense to prove that virtue will survive and prove its own sincerity, even amid the sorest troubles. The objections already urged sufficiently show the inadequacy of this theory to explain all that suffering means for life.

## CHAPTER IV

### Suffering held to be Involved in Matter, and so Necessary

In ancient writings, and in certain more modern philosophical systems, the position is taken up that all suffering may be traced to the bodily and material conditions in which all creatures live. It was therefore maintained that sufferings were necessary, and thus could not be eliminated from this mortal life. The path of wisdom was just to accept them, nay, even welcome them, in the assurance that deliverance from them would, and could, only come with the end of this life on earth.

The suggestion is made, in passing, by Eliphaz, but not adopted by him as his main explanation, that suffering was an essential and necessary element in creaturehood. His view was, as we have seen, that suffering is sent by God in punishment. But he describes the life of men as one lived in misery all the time, owing to their utter weakness. "They dwell in houses of clay. Their foundation is in the dust. They are crushed before the moth, and are destroyed between the morning and the evening. And man is born to trouble." Over against this view of the lot of man is

that of the immortal gods. They know not trouble in any shape or form, but live in perfect and unbroken bliss. The difference between the Divine and the human is thus broadly set forth. The Divine is wholly free from suffering; the human is inextricably bound up with it. In other words, suffering is the mark of the imperfect, while the perfect can have no suffering at all, not even the capacity to suffer. From this point of view suffering, of course, has no moral worth or meaning, and is neither penal nor disciplinary. It implies no manner of fault at all in man. It is bound up with human nature, and all must suffer. Hence it is said by the Greek poet—

> "Nor must you hope exemption. To be mortal
> Is to be plied with trials manifold."

This is our lot, and any protest against suffering is utter folly. It comes to all from the very nature of things; it is there as a needs be, something to be borne without complaint in a spirit altogether fatalistic.

In the earlier forms of Greek philosophy, and even in the "Phædo" of Plato, the soul of man is thought to be imprisoned in the body, and so incarcerated all through life. The view was that matter is itself inherently evil, and that it never can be made better. The soul and the body are absolutely separate and opposed, in the same way as the Divine and the human are opposed and separate. The enemy is in the thing, in matter, in the body. Hence all present life is evil, and the world wholly corrupt. Here all we can do is but a preparation for death, and every effort to make things better a wholly useless endeavour. From this

fundamental position all asceticism sprung, with all false forms of monasticism or renunciation. "By giving the enemy a fixedness of being and meaning, instead of getting rid of him, one never really gets away from him, and one finds oneself constantly defiled," as Hegel points out. Suicide would, of course, be the speediest way to cut the Gordian knot, and bring about deliverance, but the truest instinct of man's being protests against death, and demands some better attitude to life. For it is "life for which we pant," and in an even fuller and richer meaning. Hence Plato told us that "we mortals are here on duty, and must not withdraw till we have our orders." And so also says Bosanquet, "Suicide is the child's"—"then I won't play." It is a "shirking of being God's sentries." This way of speaking implies a rejection of the view that matter is evil, and calls for one that finds moral value, not in simple denunciation or renunciation, but in wise use and control. The theory that matter is evil supplies no solution of our problem; it evades it wholly. This view, however, became the adopted opinion of Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. Upon it he based his religious teaching. What led to his abandonment of his home life, with its comforts and princely privileges, was his finding that suffering so much abounded among men. And he, doubtless, believed that the soul had been imprisoned in the body in consequence of evil done in some previous birth. His aim was to bring about for all men some kind of deliverance, in which they would be freed from the evils of this bodily life and enjoy the calm and peace of the state of Nirvàna. What impressed him was that

striving based upon desire characterised all life, and that this desire caused all the sufferings of time. He therefore taught a way of wisdom by which all desire should cease, and, as a consequence, all striving and pain. But this meant all desire for existence in the conditions of time to which we are accustomed. Truly, indeed, the Buddha expressed sympathy with the sufferings of mankind, but he failed to see that many of these arose, not from selfish or unworthy reasons, but from the very highest aims. His philosophy was radically wrong, and the subsequent history of his religion has become a worship of himself and a failure to give the world any true kind of deliverance such as men were longing for. Life here had no real value for him, and this because of the false theory of matter that lay behind his teaching.

In the early Christian ages, in a similar manner, a wrong emphasis was laid upon the inherent evil of the body and of the world. In the form of Manicheeism this view had considerable influence over the outlook of men. While in the more recent philosophy of Schopenhauer it has found supreme expression. This philosopher introduced Buddhism into modern thought. To him the ultimate reality is evil, and his teaching is a dark pessimism, such as we find in the writings of Thomas Hardy. Attention is, indeed, drawn to the sufferings of life in the way of pity, but in no really helpful manner. "If," he says, "we could approximately conceive the sum total of want and pain and misery of every sort on which the sun daily shines, we would acknowledge that it would have been better if the earth, like the moon, had been but a lifeless mass."

The pessimism of a modern writer like Hardy bases itself fundamentally on the essential wrongness of the world. However good the supposed motives of any action, the action is always attended by evil results. "That's how Heaven mostly does." And the refrain is always heard, "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" There is a complete denial of any providential order in the universe. All our moral instincts are deceitful and wholly illusive. A universal woe and lamentation is seen on every side. The world and all its forces are "so horrible and cruel." The exaggeration of the ills of time is never wise, for right through them all in the darkest moments there is seen the light of love, with its countless ministries of help and healing.

And any theory of life which creates despair, or leads in any way to the cessation of such deeds, is only fraught with direst results. Any view that suffering is a necessary accompaniment of life, as the dark shadows are of the shining light, is the chief enemy to all effort and progress. It is true, indeed, that in one sense suffering is necessary in life, even in this sense that every cause has its own effect, so that wherever any violation of the laws of the universe has been made there is, of necessity, the resulting reaction. But there is no necessity, either in the will of God, or in events or things isolated and detached from their antecedent circumstances or environment, for any suffering to happen. To hold that there is any kind of necessity in this sense, is to eliminate all hope and endeavour from our life. And that can never be, for man must hope and man must work. He can do no other. What characterises man is not so much "the will to be," for

he is, but the will to overcome, to surpass all that he has yet become, and to make things and other persons round about him much better than they are.

The ascetic or monk flees from the world and its pressing duties, in the opinion that he can make nothing of the world at all. It is all so dark and hopeless to him. He sees in the very nature of things a barrier to any and every kind of promise. Evil, he feels with a shuddering sense of despair, has always been, and must always continue. He must therefore leave it alone. The only possible hope of betterness, it appears to him, lies in some sudden and miraculous intervention of God by way of Apocalypse, or in some second coming of the Christ.

So thought the pious in Israel when the Roman power had crushed all their liberties and aspirations. Their hopes were not to be realised in some slow, gradual, and orderly manner, but in a moment, by the appearance of God to deliver His people, and destroy all His and their enemies "as by a bolt out of the blue." To them, indeed, God was the God of the emergency, and not of the ever present, slowly but surely working out the good on which His heart was set.

In the same way the teaching of Scripture with regard to the second coming of Christ has been used, not by means of constant and steady ways of service to make the world ready for the coming of the King, but with largely folded arms, and a general aloofness from the strenuous tasks required of all those who would serve their day and generation, to wait for His coming in power to destroy the wicked by the

brightness of His appearance. A more careful attention to the teaching of the Master Himself would have helped men to see that He taught that the kingdom of God "cometh not with observation," but that, being within men, it was to spread and fill the earth like the growing seed or the hidden leaven. But men are ever impatient, and they are ever willing to lean on any theory of things which would allow this impatience to continue. The doctrine of the continuing necessity of any evil condition suits their aloofness and neglect of duty, their real *vis inertiæ*.

And an imperfect and really false idea of what constitutes saintship in the early Church led to a great development of monasticism in the opening years of the Christian era. Saintship was supposed to lie in the negative virtue of renunciation of the world, and in withdrawal, instead of in the positive using of the world for highest ends, and the permeation of the whole life of the community by the principles of virtue and religion. The sphere of duty was abandoned, and the forces of the world were allowed to have complete and unopposed control. To obtain the favour of God, it was curiously but vigorously maintained, not alone by Indian anchorites and fakirs, but also by the early Christians, that the only way to keep from the evil of the world was to withdraw from it. They did not see that a truer and higher virtue of soul would result, both for themselves and for others, in the resolution to eradicate the evil from the world, and diminish the existing temptations to wrong. For surely the battle must be fought in the arena of the spirit itself, and the conflict is only won when what is wrong in the world

is taken hold of by a brave heart, and with both hands, and finally caused to cease.

The self-surrender or renunciation of the monk or ascetic was also based on the false idea that suffering in itself has merit. On the contrary, is it not far more true that it is not suffering by itself that has merit, but only that suffering that is undertaken for some high and worthy end? Not the suffering undertaken and borne in self-inflicted castigation or mortification of the body, because it is the seat of evil, can be held to be meritorious in the sight of God, but only that suffering which results in the doing of some real good to others can in any way be regarded as having worth. Blame was given to the body which ought to have been given to the man himself, the doer and the agent, because of the false view he held that the body was evil. It was not at first perceived that the evil lay in the man's inner character and disposition. So that the blame could not be passed on to the body, which was only the instrument or vehicle of the soul, and which, therefore, might be good, if only the soul were good too. Goodness was supposed to belong to soul and spirit; badness to body and matter. This we now know to be a wholly false view.

The glory of man, as we have seen, lies in his freedom or power of self-determination. He is constrained by no outward necessity. With his powers of mind and intelligence, he can press towards the meaning of things around him, and so discover the laws according to which they continually work. When he comes to know all this, he can act in harmony therewith, and so in a realm of apparent necessity find himself free. He can

speak of himself as acting from necessity, but this has ceased for him to be an outward compulsion. Thus, necessity and freedom, when rightly interpreted, are not opposites. Truly, says Hegel, "real inward necessity is identical with freedom. Their opposition exists only when they are viewed in abstraction." God, freedom, and immortality are held to be the necessary postulates of the mind. Without them, it is not.

Thus, we can think of the necessity of goodness in God's world, and cannot think of evil or suffering as in any way necessary as a permanent and abiding reality. These painful experiences come because they are the results of what has been done, not because of any abstract necessity. They come, but only to pass. We may discover the causes of them, and so, by removing or ending these causes, gradually eliminate the suffering they cause. Such experiences are thus not necessary or abiding. They are moments and stages in an ongoing life, which is surmounting them and moving on to betterness. They are the passing assertions of the imperfect. Without them, indeed, the good of the perfect day cannot be realised. But it is the good that is the real, the abiding, and the eternal.

It was, therefore, a wrong view of life which made suffering necessary, in the sense of the abiding. For life is not governed by a Nemesis, or blind Fate, to which both gods and men are in subjection, an idea which was the dark background of Greek tragedy, and against which it was seriously contending, in order that its heroes and heroines might appear to be moved by human motives. The mind, conscious of freedom, believing in reason and purpose, must seek for mind,

reason, and purpose in life, so that when it is confronted with suffering, it demands that it should be understood and so explained. "Ye shall be sorrowful," said the Christ, "but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Thus is there hope for the human spirit, and no dark hindering necessity standing in the way of progress. The angel with his sword stood in the way of Balaam when he was pursuing the wrong way, and thus we may well believe that at the centre of the universe there is a guiding spirit leading into all truth. The real is not something fixed and irremediable, but that which moves on towards an ever better order by the inherent power of the life that is goodness within itself. Here is to be found the true vital *élan*, the creative force in life, the real Divine, the eternal God, Who stands

> "At the roaring loom of life,
> And weaves for us the garment we see Him by."

There is nothing in life to call for dumb acquiescence or in any way to encourage despair. On the contrary, there is ever an urgent call to be up and doing. Right and wrong may seem at times to be tangled on every side, but this only presents a challenge to man and a summons to unravel what appears a confused mass. All efforts in this direction are carried on with a deep conviction of ultimate success, and though time may be required and long patience, let us think of the long millenniums of the past through which the present has been reached. The supreme task given to our race is yet to wring

> "from out of pain
> All pleasure for a common heritage."

In some quarters there is continually shown an undue tendency to emphasise the influence of outward environment upon life and character. While we recognise this in large measure, and with all our heart condemn the continuance of evil conditions, we would at the same time urge that justice has not always been done to the greater influence which character exercises over lot. The progress of the race witnesses to this in every direction, and in every part of its wondrous history. Mind and character are always, after all, the creative forces at work, and man is ever making new values. Though the most stubborn and apparently most intractable material is at times presented, these forces leave their impress upon the changing course of things. Matter, in the long run, yields to spirit, and what seems wholly outward and alien is not really so, because it becomes obedient to the inward shaping force. The supreme Potter, though often hindered and delayed in His working, as the under potters are, still perseveres, and at the last will present in its perfected form the vessel on which He has been working.

> "Look not thou down but up
> To uses of a cup,
> The festal board lamp's flash and trumpet's call,
> The new wine's foaming flow,
> The Master's lips aglow!"

O yes, how true it is that heaven's consummate cup needed all that the wheel of life accomplished, all that the moulding hand of God had done for its perfecting.

> "I see the whole design,
> I who saw power see now love perfect too;
> Perfect I call Thy plan:
> Thanks that I was a man!
> Maker, remake, complete—I trust what
> Thou shalt do!"

The conviction of the inevitable necessity of suffering in the life of men led to another effort to solve the apparent inequality and injustice of the present, by bringing in another life in which the evils of the present might be balanced, and so redressed. On the part of some, indeed, the belief was forced upon them by the consideration that there must be some redress for the ills men suffer here. But in the case of those who already held the belief in immortality and future life, it was easy for them to find in such a hope the assurance that the innocent and good who suffered here would find at last, in the heavenly state, a compensation for the sufferings that were absolutely necessary here. A Lazarus had to lie all his days in poverty and misery at the gate of the rich man, receiving nothing but evil things now, but he was bidden to be content and patient with his lot because, in the future, he would be carried to Abraham's bosom, where he would receive those good things which would far more than make up for the miseries of time. These miseries could not be modified or ended here. Man was made to mourn, and life in time was essentially "a vale of tears." There is no doubt that this opinion was largely held in the time of Christ, and that it was not the teaching of the Master, but the prevailing view that supplied the opportunity of His parable. The truth taught by the Master was that the rich man had lost his chance of doing good in his failure to minister to Lazarus in his life-time, and thus his character determined his abiding doom. Men, said the Master, should avail themselves of the opportunities of life here to redress its evils.

But the impossibility of redressing these evils was so

firmly believed in, that the "other worldliness," against which George Eliot so powerfully lifted up her voice, became hurtfully prevalent. The present life was stript of all its real value, and death was spoken of as "the poor man's dearest friend." To the weary rest was promised in heaven, and a mansion in the skies was offered to those whose dwelling-places on earth had been wretched in the extreme. In the words of the Concordat of Napoleon, the view here expressed is put in the baldest form. "Society," it is said, "cannot exist without inequality of material wealth, and this inequality cannot exist without religion. There must be rich and poor in this world, but later on, in eternity, things will be arranged better." And Froude has remarked that "religious men in general are too well contented with the promise of a future life, as of a scene where the seeming shortcomings of the Divine administration will be carried out with a larger equity. In protest, Browning in "Paracelsus" exclaims:—

> "And why this world, this common world, a foil to be,
> A makeshift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
> To some fine life to come?"

If it is held that the evils of time are so permanent that they are ineradicable, then hope vanishes, and every arm of help is paralysed. The view stands condemned. The worth of the present life must be discovered. Wordsworth warned against the postponement of all betterment and happiness to some future world in these lines, when he bids us realise that not there alone,

> "But in the very world, which is the world
> Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
> We find our happiness, or not at all."

It can never be "permissible to fall back on the life Beyond to justify any social state or action." And Meredith truly says—

> "The present is our sentence;
> Her light is ours, if we list."

Whatever of fuller joy and happiness the future life contains, we must be on our guard against seeking in it for solutions of the wrongs of time, by holding some erroneous opinion about the necessity of them.

It is difficult, perhaps, to find any distinct theory of suffering in the tragedies of Shakespeare. He certainly did not hold in any superficial manner the view that truth or goodness were bound to succeed in this life. His representations of his heroes tell us about their sufferings, and almost invariably end in death or some dread disaster. But these sufferings do not result from any kind of fate; "they do not happen simply, nor are they sent. They proceed mainly from actions," as Bradley points out so clearly, "and those the actions of men." In this way we are to find all depending upon the character of the chief actors, and all else occupying a wholly subordinate place. External forces do not bring about the sufferings. There is, indeed, a depreciation of this weary world, and life is not sufficiently valued. But the evil and suffering flowing from it are due to evil causes working in man. The hero always perishes because of some contribution which he has himself made to the disaster. Thus, there is no necessity in matter or nature for what comes about. Some wrong and wicked thing has been done, and its consequences are terrible. The individual

sufferer is not to blame, and he is represented as suffering so tragically. We have not what Euripides, as we shall see, contributes, nor indeed anything peculiar to Christian teaching here. Probably the English tragedian was content to hold up the mirror to life, and not seek to supply any definite theory of the meaning of suffering.

The contribution made towards the solution of our problem by the "In Memoriam" of Tennyson deserves attention. We have already remarked that it was written to deal with a very acute personal sorrow, but that it soon rose above all more private considerations, to look for the meaning of suffering on some general principle capable of being applied to the life of all. Sorrow is at first a cruel fact, "the priestess in the vaults of death." And the poet cried in anguish—

> "And what to me remains of good?"

His life had almost died in him. It was, indeed, some satisfaction to have had such a friend, with all the glad experience the fellowship with one half divine could give. Yes, he felt it true that—

> "It was better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all."

But this was not enough; it was not satisfying at all. Doubtless, too, "the firmer mind was being formed," but the tie of love that bound one to his friend implied that that dear one lived on, losing not "the mortal sympathy," and really having no "change to us, although they change." His hope is true and deep of an abiding fellowship, for he says—

> "My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live for evermore."

And thus he is led to look with deepest assurance, not to any experience of service here below, but "for hope of answer or redress, behind the veil." And sorrow now may become his "bosom friend, and half of life." His old companion must remember him; and even in the perfect life, with all its work still to carry on, be linked to him with some unbreaking bond. Death, which removed only the outward form, becomes "Holy Death" now. Death had put their "lives so far apart; they could not hear each other speak, but they could commune in highest fellowship. All that of toil and suffering there had been was here "but seed of what in them is flower and fruit."

> "They are breathers of an ampler day
> For ever nobler ends."

And thus, finally, in what may be regarded as the last word, we find the poet using these words of simple faith and earnest prayer—

> "Forgive my grief for one removed,
> Thy creature, whom I found so fair;
> I trust he lives in Thee, and there
> I find him worthier to be loved."

It is of importance in this connection to point out also that pain must not be regarded as in any sense a necessary accompaniment of the progress of life, as Hinton, in his valuable work on the *Mystery of Pain*, says, "It has its root in the essential order of the universe." While, obviously, there are abounding illustrations of pain on every hand, yet we are sure that much of it is wholly unnecessary, for we find it being

greatly reduced, and the hope grows that at length pain will cease. We must end pain by every means within our power. William Blake, artist, and poet of a coming day, protests against any view that justifies the existence of pain, or acquiesces in its continuance. The fact that pain is seen in much of the process of life, as we have known, is no reason at all for thinking that it must continue. It is not in life by any wish or decree of the Almighty, we may be sure, and it is not fixed or permanent in the nature of things themselves. Hence we deprecate the thought contained in these lines of the poet Browning—

> "Put pain from out the world, what room were left
> For thanks to God, for love to man?
> Creation's meant to hide Him all it can,
> And that's what all the blessed evil's for."

Thus would we pass from any theory of life that would trace our suffering to some necessity of things, and rather find in life all "things working together for good to those that love God, and who are called according to His purpose."

## CHAPTER V

### Suffering held to be a Supreme Mystery

The failure of so many attempts to explain the meaning of suffering naturally led to the position that the whole matter was one incapable of solution, and that suffering and evil in the world is essentially mysterious, and must remain for ever a mystery to the human mind.

We have seen how the many attempts at an understanding, with which we have dealt, did not succeed in expressing the results of enquiry so as to give satisfaction to the mind. The question, therefore, still remained open, and called loudly for settlement. Like every other question that has evoked human interest, this will continue to call for solution until some one of an adequate and satisfying kind be supplied.

But in the graphic and supremely impressive piece in the Book of Job, entitled "The Voice from the Storm," we have an embargo laid upon all further enquiry into this and kindred questions. For suffering

> "is permanent, obscure, and dark,
> And shares the nature of infinity."

The "Voice out of the Storm" speaks with authority, and as it were amid dread surroundings all fitted to awe the mind of the observer and bring it into submission, not because of any inner conviction, but simply because of the terror created. In common with other

utterances in the Old Testament, the speech is declared to be that of the Almighty, and therefore a final disposal of the matter at issue once for all. The main purpose of the writer is to call a halt to the fruitless tendency, as he deems it, to dig too deeply into the heart of things, and gives what has been called "a rebuke to the presumption of the intellect and the bravado of the heart." Some have spoken of this utterance as if it were something from the "lips of God Himself," to quote Ruskin, "to effect the last necessary change in the mind of a man whose piety was in other respects perfect." Man is urged to a humble "observance of the works of God in Nature," and these are described in a series of striking pictures, well fitted to fill the mind with all "the wonder of the world, and to impress it with the splendour and majesty of the great Creator, and the utter weakness and incompetency of the creature in any way to understand the ways of such a mighty God."

We agree in recognising the glory of God in all His works; nay, living in the times we do, we behold a glory infinitely greater than anything brought before us here in these sublime etchings, but we feel that we must be on our guard against being influenced by the form in which this utterance is given. We admire the skill of the writer, but we refuse permission to him to speak the last word of God in regard to the matter before us now. In olden days the mind was more impressed with the awe and splendour of the outward than it is now. The starry heavens with all their shining glories influenced the race more in the early days than the law of conscience within did. Thus we

must surmount the form of presentation here adopted, and unawed deal with the essential truth brought before us. The authority for truth must be found not in anything outside of itself, but in itself alone, in the appeal it makes to mind and heart. The guardians of old truths have often come into collision with the heralds of the new by appealing more to tradition and the authority of a past experience than to the evidencing power the truth itself possesses. Long ago the prophet Elijah was made to feel that God spake not alone or chiefly in the awing phenomena of earthquake, storm, and fire, but rather in "the still small voice" of the heart. The special association of God with the terrible, the extraordinary, mysterious and catastrophic in Nature rather than with the calm, ordinary, intelligible and slowly advancing course of things, was common enough in olden days, and only detrimental to the best interests of true religion. The disciples of Jesus, often to the grief of their Master, shared the demand of the people for some outward sign, some heavenly vision, or some rising from the dead, something more than the truth itself, which He felt was ever its own best guarantee. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," He said, "neither will they be persuaded though one were to rise from the dead." How strange is it that with these words of the Master before them so many have sought for confirmation of the truth of His teaching in His own rising again from the grave! A double mistake has been made by men. They have looked for God in "the abnormal rather than in the normal, and in the act rather than in the agency."

But the most serious matter that meets us here is that the competency of the mind of man to enter wisely with any hope of success on an enquiry concerning the ways of God is called in question. In the first place, it is urged that man was not present in the beginning with God, when He laid "the foundations of the earth, and the morning stars sang with joy." Consequently, man is unable to know or discover the principles of the Divine working, or in any adequate way to trace the steps by which things have come to assume their present form. The prophet Isaiah pointed out to his people that no one directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor had taught Him; that He took counsel with no one. And Carlyle strikingly paraphrases the passage, "Was man with his experience present at the creation then to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals dived down to the foundations of the universe, and gauged everything there?" Here a valid knowledge of beginnings is assumed to be necessary before there can be any understanding of the laws in operation, while, as a matter of fact, more can be learnt from the fully finished work about its beginning than can be learnt from the beginning about the finished product. How little the acorn can tell us about the oak, but how much the oak can teach us about the acorn! Meredith has poured contempt upon our questions concerning the "why" and "wherefore" of the things that exist on every side. These are, he says, a "mortal brood," which lead us nowhere at all. And certainly all merely curious or simply abstract and speculative enquiries about origins for which no data are available, and "all

intruding into those things which man hath not seen, should be avoided." But the mind must ask questions, and by their means can alone make progress in knowledge and understanding. No barrier or boundary can be interposed to the onward movement of the spirit of man. "We cannot escape by saying, Thus far and no farther," remarks Bosanquet, "or by saying we take the world without asking questions. Our petrified facts will neither save our need nor maintain themselves," and the investigation must go on to the end,

"Even though it winds up the hill all the way."

The perfect expression or formulation of truth ever lies ahead, for no one formula, or any set of formulæ, in a set creed or closed system, can embody the truth, so much of which has yet to be understood.

Of course, any kind of embargo on further enquiry, attended by a threat of Divine displeasure or persecution by Church or State, is wholly unworthy, while the prohibition of such investigation, because of previous failures, is out of harmony with the true view that all past failure is only a challenge and a promise of final success. New and better methods may be adopted and a more complete and unprejudiced examination made of all relevant facts.

And this implies the greatness of the mind and its essential capacity to carry on this task. In the presence of Nature, and before God Himself in all His perfect glory, man must hold himself possessed of Divinely given faculties, bestowed upon him just for this very purpose, that he might know the works of God, and rejoice in their great Creator. It is no

glorifying of God to underrate the powers of mind. In the words of Pascal, Man may be but "a reed, and yet he is a reed that thinks." "It is only a treacherous subterfuge," says Sir Henry Jones, "to deny the competence of reason." And how can a judgment of reason do this with any possibility of acceptance? Its competency is implied even when it is denied. In the same way reason has been supposed to have a sphere of its own beyond which it must not travel. Within this sphere its power is competent and its judgments valid. It may deal with the realm of sensible experience, but it cannot go beyond this without exposing itself to challenge. But who sets the limit here and determines the sphere? It is, of course, reason that does this. But if it can determine the sphere, it can also change and enlarge it when fuller knowledge of its undeveloped powers is reached, or a larger measure of success attends its endeavours. When told to go so far, and no farther, it is impressed with the distance it has already gone, and with courage begotten by its past, plumes its feathers for higher flights in the empyræan of truth. When the critic of man's competency dwells upon the glories of creation and traces all their wonder, it is not easy to see why he should at the same time limit or question that competency. In the writings of such a Book as that of Ecclesiastes, reflecting the despair of the days when it was sent forth, or in the mediæval period when the function of reason was strictly confined by the Church of Rome to the arrangement and systematization of accepted truth, and it was forbidden to enquire farther, or in the systems of thought advocated by

Pascal, Hamilton, and Mansel in recent days, the limits of reason were fixed.

But reason itself protests against all this in its best and truest moments, and it makes "man master of his fate, and, though slowly, yet surely, urges him onward to the accomplishment of his perfect work." If reason is used freely and reverently in agreement with its own nature, not hastily or prematurely being allowed to draw conclusions, but ever urged to keep in closest touch with reality, and base its decisions, after full enquiry, upon the facts of life, no harm can flow from the freest and fullest use of our powers of mind. It never can be a pity that men think; it is really a pity that men in the mass think too little.

Questions about suffering and the Divine mode of working among men, raised continually by its presence, have very specially been held to be beyond the competency of the mind of man to discuss. They, like indeed all the matters with which religion deals, belong to an ultra rational realm, it has been held. As, for example, by Mr. Kidd in his work on "Social Evolution," in which he asserts strongly, but surely wrongly, that "No form of belief is capable of functioning as a religion in the evolution of society which does not provide an ultra-rational sanction for social conduct in the individual"; and again, "A rational religion is a scientific impossibility, representing, from the nature of the case, an inherent contradiction in terms." "Intellectual forces," he says, "tend to come into collision with this sanction." His own reliance, however, is placed upon his own intellectual forces in the long run. Religious solutions may

be grasped, it is said, by the spirit but never by the reason of man. These may verify themselves to faith and feeling, but not to reason; they are not contrary to reason, but they do not deign to fall within its sphere. The danger of such a position is supreme, for the placing of them in the region of feeling or emotion opens the door on the one hand to all manner of extravagance, and on the other hand makes them the possession of an authority fixed and determined, incapable of any change either in substance or expression. The truths of religion are supposed to be a sacred deposit committed to the Church for safe keeping, just in the form in which they were received or handed down.

The fundamental error here is the assumption that reason had no part in the original reception of the truth. A little consideration shows us that even in the receiving of truth, as well as in the expression of religious truth, the mind was all the time active, and by no means passive. Rightly understood, revelation is a process itself requiring the active employment of the mind, so that what is revealed may be accepted as the discovered truth. In no act of knowledge is the mind a clean slate on which something is written from the outside. For the reception of high truth there must be a capacity, and this is the result of the development of centuries. In accepting some new truth about God the mind approves and justifies to itself what this means. Thus, in the reception of the sacred deposit at the first the mind had its own great part to play, and that part it must continue. What it began it must carry on to the end, until at length the

expression of the truth becomes worthy and complete, not only to feeling, but also to the whole intelligence of man.

The view is declared that suffering is a mystery. Now even this is to say something about suffering; we are told that it is a mystery. We can only say this after we have made diligent enquiry and exhausted every means of ascertaining its meaning. Nothing can be said to be a mystery in itself until this is done. Of course, everything is a mystery until it has been unveiled, and so understood. A vast number of things which once were mysteries to our forefathers have yielded up their secrets to their descendants. The whole progress of science involves the curtailment and diminution of the realm of mystery, and we are sure that what has been done in the past with such splendid results is only a promise of what must go on until every so-called mystery, or all unknown things, be made known. The *terra incognita* must be thoroughly explored.

And this, indeed, is in full agreement with Christian teaching, for St. Paul tells us that the mystery, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, is now revealed." And the Master said, "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." Thus all mystery is alien both to Christianity and to science. The way in which the ancient Eleusinian mysteries were held to be the possession of a few initiated persons, who would jealously guard them during their life, and hand them down to their successors, was the reason of there being an end of them altogether.

We would therefore deprecate the way in which men speak of the mysteries of the Faith. We are bidden to draw near into the Holy of Holies, and Christ has broken every one of the seals on the book of life. Much of the alleged mystery has arisen from the language used to set forth the truth, and which prevents it being understood. The urgent demand is that all mystery should be removed in a better expression and in a fuller realisation of the truth itself.

The charge is made in the Book of Job that the demand for explanation and an attempt at solution is mere cavilling with the Almighty. Here is the challenge: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" It is spoken of as a contending with God. Now, let it be clearly understood that the demand for explanation is altogether right, and that an attempt at solution may be made in a wholly reverent spirit. A leading Statesman, distinguished for his contributions to philosophy in our own time, has said, "What kind of a universe would that be which we could understand?" and in the following lines Browning gives expression to the same view—

> "How would I praise,
> If such as I might understand,
> Make out and reckon on His ways?"

It is not, of course, to be desired that any way of God, or His whole world, should be comprehended by a simple or untrained mind, or in its fulness by any one, or even many, but it is contended that there must be reason in all God's ways which is capable of being found out, and that in the world reason is fully

expressed, and will be finally discovered, for "the real is the rational." When for example, it is sung,

> "God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform,"

it must not be meant that there is unreason, or something above reason, in the Divine working, but that this has not yet been known or discovered by man. Its ultimate discovery is a hoped for consummation. True praise ascends to God for the revelation of His love, and for all that He has made known to us. "They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee." No reverence is shown to God by a refusal to use to their fullest the powers that God has given us. "Under deep emotion, men think that by putting a veil over self-consciousness, and surrendering all understanding, they thus become the beloved ones of God, to whom He gives His wisdom while they sleep. This is the reason," says Hegal, "that, in point of fact, what they do conceive and bring forth in sleep is dreams." Altogether, the attitude of nescience is unworthy of man. It may also imply an idle unwillingness to a diligent exercise of our faculties, and is almost certainly accompanied by all sorts of strange imaginings.

The advance of knowledge is a gradual but continuous unveiling of God and truth. To speak of a veiled Being or a veiled quest is not at all justifiable in the light of what we know. God has ever been unveiling Himself, and is ever willing to reveal Himself more fully to the seeking mind. Doubtless, there is a veil between the seeker and the object he desires to understand. But it is important to clearly see that the

veil is not in or on the object itself. Suffering, like other things we want to know about, is continually yielding up its inner meaning; it lies open and naked before us, ready for our approach. It waits and courts examination. But the veil may be upon the mind of the seeker. His character may hinder his progress. Hence, in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," when treating of the search for the Holy Grail, the poet makes Lancelot, conscious of the evil of his life, say in bitterness when he realised his failure—

> "But what I saw was veiled,
> And covered, and this quest was not for me."

The unveiled heart, that is the pure heart, alone can see God, and with it the alert intelligence must go, and the surrendered will.

Any assumption in regard to the nature of God must not be allowed to dominate the mind. All that God is in His gracious unveiling in Christ will have to be appreciated. While strong dissatisfaction may be felt with explanations given of suffering in the earlier days of lesser light and knowledge, and some justification granted for the view that it was mysterious, we yet feel that this way of speaking was wrong even then. The door to further knowledge lay in full view, and open wide. But to hold in our days that suffering is a mystery seems to us very much worse. The obligation lies upon us to explore every possible avenue, and when so much light from science and experience is flooding every field of study, surely even here the meaning of suffering may be found. At this point we have simply to say that the search for the explanation must not in

any way be barred, but, on the contrary, diligently pursued.

In Job the penitent and humbled man is called upon to renounce his former opinions, and withdraw all that he had said in his ignorance. The Job here dealt with was not the Job of the Speeches and Epilogue, for "he had spoken that which was right concerning God." That Job had nothing to retract or withdraw. But what we have to deal with here is a certain attitude to man. Man is declared to be wholly weak, and a mere nothing in the presence of God. Thus the power of the Almighty is magnified. The worth of man, as made in the likeness and image of God, is not brought before us at all. A higher and worthier view of God, a God of grace and love, as we have already seen Him to be, accompanied with a truer and worthier view of man as a seeker after God, and desirous to enter into the Divine fellowship, would prevent man speaking of himself as vile and of no value. The abstract aloofness of God, and His distance from man, makes the solution of suffering well nigh impossible. Only by a true and complete incarnation of the Divine in the human, when the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and they beheld His glory, full of grace and truth," could the chasm between God and man be bridged. Only when the Son of God came to seek even the one lost sheep, and, after pain and suffering all His own, brought him home amid rejoicing, could the place of suffering, in its highest meaning, be discovered. This we hope to be able to do when some other explanations have been removed out of the way, and the manifold nature of suffering has been more clearly set forth.

There had indeed to be a withdrawal and renouncing of all previous views, not alone because suffering was held to be a mystery, but because these views were insufficient and inadequate. On the basis of the current conceptions and accepted opinions, it was impossible to reach a true or satisfying solution of our problem. New categories were required, and a freer, fuller touch with the experiences of life in its many and varying manifestations. A bold and brave tackling of these had to come, and when that stage would be reached the solemn declaration that suffering must be deemed a difficulty would be rolled at once on one side, and all doubt and perplexity removed when the meaning of suffering, especially that of the saints, the best and noblest children of God, would be seen in all its glory. The hidden mystery of it all would then pass away, and the saints of God be enabled to rejoice even in their sufferings.

## CHAPTER VI

### Suffering held to be the Method of the Divine Discipline of Men, and of Wise Chastening.

Undeterred by the failures of previous efforts to find a solution for the presence of suffering, nay, the rather encouraged to go on in the hope of ultimate success, the thought of the world has supplied us with another explanation, which was worked out in the writings of the Greek tragedian Sophocles, and strongly advocated in the speeches of Elihu in the Book of Job. The explanation is that suffering is sent by God for the betterment of the sufferer, that he may grow and increase in goodness and holiness. Suffering, in the case of good men, can not come by way of necessity or of punishment, but wholly in loving wisdom, to wean the good man from all imperfection, and to lead him on to higher and better things. In the Book of Deuteronomy, also, we find expression given to this view. In that writing (chap. viii. 2) the forty years in the wilderness are declared to be a time of discipline and wise chastening. God is represented as leading Israel about these many years to make them a truer instrument in the Divine hand, and more fit to enter upon the enjoyment of the land of promise. They were being humbled and proved. Thus they were urged to see a deep meaning in events which were all so

strange and unaccountable. "Thou shalt consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." The good have faults, and for these they suffer a kind chastening, lest by continuance in evil ways a worse thing happen unto them. Eliphaz in his first speech had given expression to this view, but it was not his accepted opinion, and therefore he passed away from it. But his words tell of the blessedness of the man whom God correcteth, therefore he says, "despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." A similar view is found in several of the Psalms, and finds a final expression in the letter to the Hebrews: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth"; and this Divine chastening is not for His pleasure, "but for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness," for "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that have been exercised thereby." This view of suffering has been largely received into the current orthodoxy of the Christian Church. It requires, therefore, to be carefully and sympathetically examined.

It is interesting to observe the spirit in which Elihu represents himself as coming forward. He feels that he has got something to say, a view that must be expressed. He finds that sufficient emphasis has not been given to the explanation of suffering which he has received by inspiration, and which he therefore makes his own. Some critics hold that this is the view taught by the Book of Job. It is certainly the last to be

propounded and brought forward, notwithstanding the protest of the writer of the "Voice out of the Storm" episode. To him suffering is not a mystery; it is capable of explanation.

What here, however, is alone dealt with is the suffering of the righteous servant of God; the man who has been accepted by God, and has entered into a covenanted religion with Him. Nothing is said about the sufferings of others, and we are allowed to take it that Elihu agreed with the earlier view of the friends, that in their case suffering was punishment sent for evil-doing.

Job is the typical good man, the saint and servant of God. Elihu cannot bear the thought that what such a one suffers comes by way of punishment. This is repellent to him. But he cannot admit that, however good Job is, he is altogether perfect. No doubt the strong assertions of innocence to which Job was driven by the accusations of his friends led him to make extreme statements, and Elihu was grieved and angry when he heard Job saying that he was pure and free from fault, for in this way he "justified himself rather than God." The complete righteousness of Job alone is called in question, in the conviction that it can be deepened and increased. A higher ideal of goodness was suggested; and while recognising to what an extent Job had already attained to the current ideal, Elihu calls the afflicted saint to yet better things, and he believes that this is the purpose of the sufferings sent. He would not have him to count that "he had already attained, either were already perfect," but with the apostle Paul he would have him to follow after,

"forgetting those things that are behind, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." In other words, it was God's supreme concern that he should be made perfect, and that for this end God was afflicting him. He was, like all saints, to be "made perfect through suffering."

This teaching can be illustrated from the Book of Psalms, as we have pointed out. For example, in Ps. cxix. 67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes. In faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." Here there is the recognition that suffering comes for a wise reason, and the sufferer feels that he has benefited by suffering. And to the same effect we have the Christian hymn—

"Let sorrow do its work;
Send grief and pain;
Sweet are Thy messengers,
Sweet their refrain,
When they can sing with me,
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee."

It is interesting to find the view of suffering with which we are now dealing being worked out and adopted in Sophocles in his highly finished and artistic dramas. Æschylus, his immediate predecessor, had indeed forecasted this view of suffering, but it is in Sophocles that we see it prevailing as his own special teaching. Æschylus had taught the doctrine that the Gods send speedy punishments on evil-doers, so that what a man sows that also shall he reap. But he went

far beyond the thought expressed in these lines of an earlier day—

> "Blood for blood, and blow for blow,
> Thou dost reap as thou dost sow.
> Age to age, with living wisdom,
> Speaketh thus to man."

The doctrine of the *lex talionis* was being left far behind, and the penal view of suffering was being surmounted. A deeper view was being sought in Greece as among the Jews. And thus we find in the drama of the "Agamemnon" the teaching that suffering is a means of teaching; that suffering (πάθος) is learning (μάθος). The tragic element in Greek legend was that suffering haunted a crime-stained house, and so all its members were held in grim necessity's law to suffer until the whole family perished. It was not the blame of the individual; he was guiltless of the deed; fate must share the blame thereof. But an advance was made upon this view when Æschylus used such words as these in the "Eumenides": "Wisdom cometh by constraint." "It is Zeus who guideth mortals on the road to wisdom, who hath appointed the sure ordinance—by suffering thou shalt learn."

In Sophocles, however, we have this view continually. This poet gave to compassion the rank of a goddess at the side of Zeus, and thus a deep sympathy ran through all his consideration of the sufferings of those who were innocent of blame. And this attitude is clearly shown in his treatment of Œdipus. The supreme sufferings of this hero did not imply that there was any guilt in him. At first he was self-willed and

impetuous, but after the ordeal of suffering through which he passed he found "a place of repentance, and survives his worst misfortunes to die a god-protected and god-honoured hero." "Thus," says Adam in his work, *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, "thus Œdipus claims to have been taught by suffering and time." How different the Œdipus of Thebes from the Œdipus at Colonus! At first his immense suffering seemed all so arbitrary and unjust, even as Job's did to him. But ere the end "his old pride gives place to humility, and his old hardness to a new kindliness and generosity." He accepts his ordeal as all for his good, and utters this sublime truth, that

> "One soul working in the strength of love
> Is mightier than ten thousand to atone."

And the same is seen in other dramas, so that Professor Butcher says: "Sophocles is the first of the Greeks who has clearly realised that suffering is not always penal, but that it has other functions to discharge in the Divine economy"; and he finally says, "Unmerited suffering receives at least a partial explanation."

And coming down to more recent times, we find in the second part of Dante's work, that dealing with Purgatorio, how he holds that suffering is the supreme means of cleansing. Doubtless suffering in purgatory was thought of as the means whereby, after death, the soul was purged from mortal sins, and made ready to enter Paradise; but the fundamental assumption lying behind this view was that suffering was a method of discipline to make men better. What has not been accomplished here on earth is to be perfectly done in

the intermediate state. The *Commedia Divina* is truly "an allegory of human life in the form of a vision of the world beyond the grave," and "the inmost history of the poet's own spiritual life is blended with his conception of the ultimate destinies of mankind." The opinion prevailing in Dante's time is the same view which Elihu held, and the one with which we are now dealing. The souls in purgatory long to fit themselves for heaven by undergoing the appointed discipline, and when their will is perfectly conformed to the will of God their deliverance is secured. The goodness of God, which ordered all such cleansing sufferings, is a matter of abiding praise. The pious saint feels that it was with "mercy and with judgment" that his earthly life was controlled by God, and that all his afflictions had been wisely sent. It never could be his to complain, but to take into his hands the cup of suffering. A supreme resignation to the Divine will, not always understood, but always held in the particular dispensation to be working for the good of the individual, was called for. And it must be recognised that some of the best of the saints have accepted such a view. Indeed, they welcomed suffering even for its own sake, believing that thereby some high good was to be reached. Nay, suffering in its own nature was deemed a sign of goodness, and the greater the suffering the higher the goodness and merit of the sufferer. By its means what was held to be the true life was being reached. St. Simeon, on his pillar, and amid dread sufferings, cries out—

"Show me the man hath suffered more than I,"

and, after long endurance, he at last expressed his faith. "I trust," he said,

> "That I am whole and clean and meet for heaven."

It is now our task to look into the grounds on which this view of the disciplinary value of suffering rests.

And first of all, our attention must be directed to the belief still maintained in common with previous theories, and prevalent to this day in many quarters, that suffering is sent direct by God. This belief continues the old primitive view of things, according to which God acts directly and immediately, without a use being made of means or agencies of any kind. It is as if God took in His hand some particular disease and applied it to some individual person; but it has been truly said that "the idea of God choosing our miseries for our special case is abhorrent." The Greeks had their myth of Pandora and her box. She was created, as a woman of great charms, to bring calamities of all kinds upon the race. In her box were to be found whatever trouble should come upon man; it had only to be opened to allow some harm to fall on the race. This was, of course, a crude myth, and calamities were sent not for the good of man, but for his undoing. They came by way of punishment from the angry gods. The advance of knowledge in regard to diseases has, however, been great. At one time, indeed, they were held to be caused by demoniacal spirits residing in the individual; but as soon as particular attention was given to the circumstances in which sickness came about, it was more and more discovered that each had its own cause or germ, and its own appropriate soil in

which to grow. Our own days have been showing us in most useful and interesting ways how diseases are brought about, and how they may be combatted and ended. To this we shall have to return, but at this point we have only to note how sickness can be traced to the violation of the laws of nature, or to the reception into our body of the germs of disease by contact or infection. When one is laid upon a sick bed there is no need of suggesting some Divine intervention or special providence. It is sufficient to examine the circumstances, and without delay to find out the cure. Medical science refuses to admit the element of the mysterious here, and insists on a complete examination and explanation. Doubtless, we may still see the operation of God in all our life, in health as well as in sickness, but this must be in no spasmodic or exceptional way. It must be in the recognition of Divine laws ever at work. As Browning puts it—

> "Not by the operation of a law,
> Whose maker is elsewhere at other work."

In close connection with this sending of all events by God, the mind gradually came to protest against the sending of evil or sickness by God, and to insist, as Plato does in his *Republic*, and St. James in his Epistle, that God sends nothing that causes hurt or pain to man, but only what is good and healing. He is the God that healeth. We must therefore cease speaking of God sending sickness or trouble of any kind.

In the second place, we note that the use of sickness to bring men to a better state rests upon the idea that

force is a remedy. We have already had occasion to remark that moral and spiritual results can only be brought about by moral and spiritual causes. The rod of chastisement or chastening may produce some momentary promise of amendment, but it can secure no permanent or abiding one. If there is to be betterness there must be a change of attitude and character, some real recognition on the part of the wrongdoer of the wrongness of what he is doing, and some clearer seeing of the good as it is commended rather than commanded to him. In other words, what is needed by man is that there should be some loving and gracious revelation to heart and mind, which should have all the power of a new and expulsive affection, and this should be given not in word merely but much more in living example, even at greatest cost, not to the wrongdoer, but to the saviour or helper who would wean him from an evil course.

The evidence of life, with many patent facts, goes to show that suffering does not have the remedial result hoped for in probably the vast majority of cases. "Unhappily," says Hinton, "suffering more often fails to teach or subdue. Often it hardens or perverts. The failure of sufferings to bring men back to God is clearly seen in the lament of the prophet Amos. Sufferings of the most severe kind were brought upon the people by God, and yet in a fivefold repeated refrain the prophet sadly exclaims, "Yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord!" Again, we have the words of Isaiah to the same effect. "Why," he asks his nation on God's behalf, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint."

And instances of harm rather than good being accomplished by suffering can be found on every page of history. To quote but one. Shakespeare shows us how the severe sufferings of King Lear only drove him mad. And when cases appear to show that what the Psalmist said is true, that it is good for a man to be afflicted, it will be found that it was not the affliction by itself that wrought the benefit, but the already formed character and attitude of the sufferer. When Mrs. Browning sang, "Knowledge by suffering entereth," it has to be borne in mind that a willingness to know must have been present, and that in this way the mind used the experiences of suffering, as it did all the other facts of life, to grow in knowledge. If the spirit of a man be rebellious, and calls in question the right or justice of any trouble, the suffering only makes him worse instead of better. If, however, on the contrary, a man seeks to live a surrendered life, and to benefit by all that happens to him, even the most bitter episodes in life will have some teaching for him. Suffering in this way may be learning, but here

> "'Tis the taught already that profit by suffering."

And thus also Shelley truly says, when his words are rightly understood—

> "Poets learn in suffering what they teach in song."

Meredith has much impressive teaching concerning the place of suffering in life. Life, he tells us, is built up on thwackings. He speaks about the "celestial hail of thwacks"; and again he sings—

> "Fortune in this mortal race
> Builds on thwackings for its base."

But his view is in agreement with what we have been urging, for he goes on to say,

> "If we nourish hopes of fame, or would be known in song,
> We must frame our souls to meek acceptance of the thong."

The importance lies in the framing of our souls to take a true view of all life. We must command our life, and never let it drift like a life at ease. A spirit of fortitude like what Nature "shows at the shedding of the leaves" is enjoined. This is not mere fatalism or crude indifference. It is not the acceptance of suffering as a fact of life, but a brave looking at it in its face, and brave tackling with it, which shall understand its causes, and be able to account for its incidence. This we need continually. If we ventured to think that suffering was sent for our good, then all efforts to trace its causes and end its ravages were a flying in the face of Providence. On the view of suffering being for our good, the more we have of it the better. But against the acceptance of suffering as a method of discipline our mind protests.

And there is an appearance of arbitrariness in the way even good men suffer, which is strange, and rouses feelings of revolt. If suffering is a means of benefiting, why should not all suffer? Why should some suffer so intensely and others so lightly? Any kind of exceptional treatment applied to some would be most unjust. And we all know how some of the very best of the saints have suffered all their days. If we know their history we can discover the causes of this. And if we search out the causes at work in our lives, and try to understand how to deal with them, we shall find that

we should hold no unworthy idea of God, or any inadequate explanation of suffering in the case of some which does not apply to all.

Sometimes what we regard as an imperfect view of life leads men to argue that an economy of pain and suffering is necessary if man's ultimate good is to be reached. This implies a theory of the necessity of suffering. It has been put this way: "God permits man to suffer, otherwise He could not have man's good at heart." Our point of view, however, is that all suffering is in opposition to the Divine will, and that all Divine resources have always been, and continually are employed for its cessation. It is an unworthy thought of God that in order to secure men's good He allowed evil to emerge. It would have been an interference with the freedom of the creature, and an impossible method of dealing with a developing world to have prevented suffering or the imperfections of time. All these had to come in order to be surmounted in the onward movement of life.

But, finally, we have to emphasise the fact that suffering in early times, and too often in our own days, has been viewed solely in connection with the individual and his benefiting. There was then, and there is too often still, a failure to realise the way in which men are all bound up in the bundle of life with one another. No one can be detached or live separately from others around him. Each is dependent on countless others for all his growth and his every comfort. Consequently, any judgment about some one individual, apart altogether from his relation to others or their relation to him, becomes wholly valueless. The limited and

restricted standpoint which is adopted when the sufferings of time are viewed alone in their bearing upon one person, or a section of a people, or a nation, leads to false conclusions. It has very well been said that "our very thought of right and wrong depends on the question whether it is a thought of ourselves or of others that moves us." That is truly right and good which contributes to the well-being of the social whole, while that must be essentially wrong which lives a self-centred life, and thinks about itself alone. The individual rises with the community of which he is a part, and falls as it falls. His real good, then, is attained not so much in what profits or benefits himself directly or chiefly, but in that which does real good to others. This, of course, is true, that in benefiting others, in making many really good and true, he benefits himself. He shares in the happiness and goodness of the whole. But the emphasis is laid here not on the direct and immediate benefiting. And, indeed, if any one is purposed to think about himself alone, he will lose all true benefiting, while at the same time hindering the advancement of others. Thus, if one were to fix his mind on the way in which a particular suffering were to affect himself alone, without any consideration of the way in which it was affecting others, he would take up a wholly wrong attitude to life, and the most serious results would happen to his own character. He might remember that if one "member suffer, all the other members suffer along with it," so that the making of it simply a matter of his own perfecting would be to ignore the brotherhood of man and the true fellowship of suffering.

One must not have his eye too exclusively fixed upon his own perfecting, as if that were an experience that is to come to him apart altogether from what helps and succours those around him. He must have a real and living interest in the others who with him make up the whole of life. The Stoic may be simply a spectator of what goes on, eager to get the highest amount of good out of it all for himself alone. He may "contemplate the spectacle of life with appropriate emotions." This, however, is never enough, and altogether selfish. Even some complete identification with the sufferings of others in a wondrous sympathy, which simply thinks of the development of oneself, and ignores the efforts necessary to end these woes, is quite imperfect as a worthy attitude of the soul.

Thus the truly good man cannot concern himself alone with his own salvation or his own growth in grace. Through him others, too, must be helped and made perfect. He without them cannot be made perfect. But this implies a wider view of things than is taken by those who regard suffering as a method of discipline for the individual. It raises deeper questions, which can only be solved in the light of some other and better view of suffering. In itself the view that suffering is a method of discipline is wholly inadequate.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Forecasting of the true Meaning of Suffering in Greek Tragedy, and in later Jewish Prophecy

So far as we have now proceeded in regard to our enquiry we have had several suggested explanations under review, but up to this point no one completely satisfying solution of the meaning of suffering has yet been reached. Continuing our search for this we come now to deal with two important writings, in which we feel that we have a supreme forecasting of what we believe to be the true and ultimate solving of the problem which has been occupying our attention in these pages. These two writings are those of the third and last great Greek tragedian, Euripides, and of the prophet of the Restoration period in Israel's history, usually called Isaiah. We will, then, at this stage take up these and see what contribution they have to give.

The period during which Greek tragedy reached its high water-mark was that of those great days when, as the result of the splendid victories won over the Persians, Athens attained the zenith of her glory. Then, too, Greek tragedy, in the hands of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, touched its highest point. From the battle of Marathon in 480 B.C., down to the time of Socrates, the mind of Greece was deeply concerned in discussing vital questions, as in a time of

intellectual awakening. It was indeed a time of crisis and transition. To quote the words of Professor Gilbert Murray, "The prospects of the human race appeared so brilliant to the highest minds, and Athens, the home of freedom and of beauty, was to be saved by the sacrifice of her people."

The world was then passing through one of its greatest ages. The final form of the Book of Job has been placed about the year 400 B.C., while the founders of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism had flourished probably in the early or middle part of the century then closing. The commonly accepted creeds and customs of the peoples were being criticised.

In Greece the writings of Homer, with their rich store of ancient myth and legend, which had been held to be a kind of inspired book, with supreme authority as a sum of all human knowledge, were now being called in question. Their sacred precincts were being invaded. All the earlier proverbial wisdom of former days was being criticised in the light of advancing knowledge. In this way the world of thought and action was being reshaped to meet modern and pressing needs.

Æschylus, as we have seen, took a leading part in this movement. His treatment of the Homeric legends shows a master mind grappling with the deepest problems, and eager to find their solution. In his tragedies we find suggestions of several explanations, but it was left to his followers to adopt one or other of these definitely. He was obviously not satisfied with the penal theory of suffering, and he gave two views of how suffering might be explained. One of these, that

suffering was a great teaching, we have dealt with as the contribution of Sophocles. The other view, which was adopted finally by Euripides, and wrought out in fullest detail by him, was that forecasted in the way the story of Prometheus was dealt with. This is the view that the sufferings of the good are not penal or remedial, but a voluntary sacrifice taken up by themselves.

It is interesting to note, in passing, how, in the first speech of Eliphaz, several possible explanations were adumbrated, while only one was discussed by himself, and the others left for future discussion. This is exactly what we find in Æschylus.

He takes up the story of Prometheus, condemned to suffer on the rock to which he was chained because of his having befriended man without the consent of Zeus, and indeed in defiance of his power. The first of the three dramas dealing with this theme, in which the action of the hero is set forth, is lost, but in the second, or "Prometheus bound," we have an elaborate description of the sufferings which were being endured. These were severe to the highest degree, and the sufferer is represented as crying out in bitterness of spirit—

> "Behold! what I, a god, endure from gods!
> My sin—to save mankind!"

The action of Prometheus is held to be justifiable as a protest against the despotic and tyrannical rule of Zeus. Deepest sympathy is thus called forth for the sufferer. It is worthy of note how boldly anything unworthy of a true conception of the Divine is criticised, and all in

the interests of a better thought of what God truly is. So it was in the speeches of Job. He really made no attack upon God or on the moral order of the Universe, but upon a wrong way of conceiving God and that order. Such apparent attacks in Job and Æschylus, and in later literature, only serve the highest ends, by demanding the abandonment of less worthy views and the proclamation of better ones.

In the third drama, however, a new view point is developed. The conduct of Zeus is shown to have in it a purpose of love and wisdom, as well as the action of Prometheus. Thus the suffering hero can cease to protest, and in a voluntary way accept his sufferings, and acquiesce in them. When he comes to understand that the interests of humanity are truly being advanced by what he is enduring the hero can take them upon himself without complaint. Thus he is finally represented as willing "to serve the rock," to which he was bound, for such a cause.

We cannot fail here to note a distinct movement of thought towards a better view of things. There is not, indeed, the definite and distinct attitude of Euripides, but there is progress in its direction of an interesting kind. We must note, however, that there is still something of the view that suffering, and not the direct vision of the goodness of the cause, leads up to this conviction. By what he suffers man is taught to see the end in view, and embrace it. What we shall find later is the consciousness of the rightness of the cause before suffering has commenced, accompanied by the resolve to endure the suffering for the high end, that is perceived.

Æschylus represents Prometheus as saying—

> "On men a boon bestowing,
> I wrought sorrow for myself worse than expected."

But what we shall expect to find in the true man is that he is so convinced of the goodness of the cause for which he stands, that he will face any suffering if only he can secure the object sought.

We come now to Euripides in whose writings we believe that we can find what we hold to be the final explanation of the sufferings of the good clearly forecasted. For in them a deep expression is given to the conviction that the good man or woman should take up their sufferings for a true cause in a brave and voluntary way. Thus a special interest gathers round this third tragedian. Dr. Adam remarks that "he deserves to be reckoned among the Religious teachers of Greece. At the present day he is to many the object of an admiration so enthusiastic that it may almost be called a cult"; for, as another scholar writes, "There is hardly a single problem in Greek philosophy, before and after his life-time, of which he does not take account."

He found his themes in the stories of Antigone, Alcestis, Macaria, and Iphigeneia. Each of these endured suffering which had in themselves a supreme moral worth. In Antigone he saw the case of a noble spirit suffering on behalf of the unwritten and eternal laws of God in protest against lower and poorer conventions. Alcestis, in the same way, is represented as being willing to suffer for her husband. This attitude on her part is held to be of highest value, for she is allowed to return to him from the gates of

gloomy Hades. She had voluntarily resolved to die in order to save her husband from his impending fate. The same truth is taught about the virgin martyr Macaria, who finely expresses her thought in these words—

> "I have failed you nought,
> Have stood you champion, for mine house have died.
> My treasure this shall be, for babes unborn,
> Espousals foregone!"

The poet had a high ideal before his mind, and by "his new and deeper interpretation of humanity" showed what he deemed to be the best in life, the truly Divine.

A somewhat fuller account must be given of the treatment of the Iphigeneia story by Euripides. For in this we have a very complete illustration of the principle we wish to emphasise as his contribution to our study. She was the daughter of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks in the attack upon Troy. On the voyage thither the fleet was hindered from pursuing its further course by what was believed in these superstitious times to be the anger of the gods. Calchas, the fanatical priest, declared that this anger could only be allayed by the blood of a noble maiden. For this sacrifice Iphigeneia was chosen. In the oldest representation she is brought before us as an unwilling victim. "Why should she die?" she is made to ask. "How could she become a wind-abating sacrifice?" Thus it is set forth in the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus. The people, however, were so possessed with the idea that her death could satisfy the gods and expedite their

undertaking, that they ignored her maiden prayers and her pitiful appeals to her father.

"Naught made they of these and of her virgin age."

But when we come to Euripides, and look at his treatment of this theme, we find him representing the fair damsel as so convinced of her duty to her country and of the service she can render to her people, that she comes forth willingly to die for Hellas. She rebukes her father and mother for raising objection, and spurns all offers of help. She goes forth gladly to the field of sacrifice, and bids her father strike the fatal blow. But it is a story with a miraculous ending. For, to express the Divine approval of such voluntary sacrifice, the gods intervene. Iphigeneia is carried off, and a slain hind is seen bleeding on the ground.

In this striking way our poet finds in this heroine the noblest instance of voluntary sacrifice, and his fundamental belief that this is the right way to deal with suffering is fully expressed.

Three other illustrations of supreme voluntary suffering may here be given. Abraham's case is our first. He felt called upon to sacrifice his son to prove his loyalty to the God Whom he served, even as the nations around were doing for their false gods. Could he do this? He reached the high point of voluntary surrender. He was willing to make the sacrifice of his son; but, as in the case of Iphigeneia, it was the sacrifice of Abraham's will that was of supremest worth. A ram caught in a thicket was slain, and Isaac was unbound and restored to his father's arms.

The second case of splendid voluntary sacrifice is

that of the noble Roman youth, Mettus Curtius. It is recorded that a great abyss appeared in the Roman Forum, causing much alarm. The soothsayers were consulted, and the answer given was that it could only be filled up and closed by the greatest treasure of the city being thrown into that yawning chasm. For this purpose Curtius sacrificed his life in a most splendid act of self-devotion. As Rome's greatest treasure he threw himself into the abyss and saved his city.

The third illustration is that of Jonah. When he was fleeing, as he thought, from the presence of his God, and conscious of a supreme act of disobedience, he was overtaken by a storm which threatened destruction to the ship in which he sailed. The superstitious sailors saw in this peril the anger of the gods, and demanded that some sacrifice might be given to allay their wrath. In a spirit of voluntary sacrifice Jonah said, "Take me up and cast me into the sea. So shall the sea be calm unto you." And they did so.

So essentially true was this principle felt to be that in the days of Christ it was universally accepted, and Caiaphas only quoted a current belief when he said that "it was expedient that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not."

We would now pass over from what we hold to be the splendid forecasting of truth given by Euripides to what we regard as the high-level mark reached by prophetic thought in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.

There is here a distinct progress being made toward the understanding of the meaning of suffering. The experiences of the prophet Jeremiah, and the striking words in which he gave expression to them, had

undoubtedly much to do in helping on enquiry into this matter. His sufferings were of the most severe kind, and full of deepest tragedy. In his heart of hearts he was truest patriot and most devoted lover of his people; yet it was his lot to speak of a terrible time when the Temple would be forsaken of God, and the nation carried into captivity. He was truly the servant of God in a most trying situation, and thus he became the type of the suffering servant of God so touchingly described by Isaiah. How tender and appealing are the words in which he sets forth his experience. So many were conspiring against him, and he tells us how he was in complete ignorance of what was going on, and of any reason for their opposition to his endeavours for their good. Thus he says:

> "I knew not that they had devised evil devices against me,
> I was indeed like a gentle lamb that is led forth to slaughter."

Ezekiel, as we have noted, made a strong protest against the current opinion that the captivity was wholly due to the sins of former generations. He felt that it was his duty to condemn the wrong-doings of his own time and rebuke the complacency of his contemporaries. And what Ezekiel held is, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." His view, it is true, was not fully worked out into any consistent system. The prevalent note is that the sufferings of the Captivity were the punishment of sin in accordance with the penal view held by the friends of Job. But there is another aspect of the subject which is much emphasised by this prophet, and so quite distinctive of

his teaching. It is his profound conviction that the glory of God Himself was concerned; for over and over again we meet this important mode of expression, "Not for your sakes do I this, but for Mine own Name's sake that it may not be profaned among the nations." Here the view is that suffering served some high end in the Divine economy, and is one to which we have already referred.

In this way it was the sufferings of the Captivity that were making the questioning so acute at this time; hence it was at the end of these, when the dawn of a better day was near, that the prophet of the Restoration makes his sublime contribution in the chapter we have mentioned. In an earlier chapter, indeed, he details such sufferings as Jeremiah in particular and perhaps also himself had known.

> "Yahveh hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious
> nor turned myself away.
> I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them
> that plucked off the hair.
> I hid not my face from shame and scoffing,
> for Yahveh is my help."

In such words we are told that the sufferer accepts his sufferings in a wholly voluntary way for the good of others. He felt that to perform any useful service to his people and the cause of his God he had to enter the zone of suffering with his own free and full consent. He is altogether innocent, but the misery of his people presses in upon him, and in their interests he must take their burden upon himself. How beautiful are the deeply touching words which have in every succeeding age fallen on the ear with truest comfort and sweetest

music! They always reach the heart of a weary and perplexed age.

> "He was wounded for our transgressions.
> He was bruised for our iniquities.
> The chastisement of our peace was on him,
> And by his stripes we are healed."

Here the thought is clearly expressed that the good man, the true man who represents and embodies in himself the highest ideal of life for his own time, is the man who enters so really into the sins and sorrows of others that he willingly takes them upon himself. He makes no complaint, and utters no word of blame. He has the vision that if the evil causes at work in life have to be removed this task must be undertaken by himself at whatever cost. In the picture so splendidly drawn by the prophet we would see the deep conviction expressed that for every worthy life there must be in some real sense a true vicarious suffering. Here, in other words, a definite principle is declared which is to be applicable to all life. It is not to find expression alone in some one supreme personality, but above all in every true life. Whether in the more limited circle of a man's own private life, in his individual or family life, his business or social life, or in his more public and national life, a man has to act upon the same principle, that principle which Euripides demanded should be shown in all his representations of great and true persons.

Of course, this principle was in this, its first proclamation, accompanied by the limitations of the time in which it was given. The prophet himself was painfully conscious that his own age had not nearly reached the

truth he felt and saw. He was far above his own time. Hence we find him sadly exclaiming, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of Yahveh been revealed?" Yet here was the seed and germ of the final solution of our problem, the true explanation of why the righteous suffer. The particular limitation of the expression of the principle to which we would draw attention is that the bearing of the suffering is not yet seen in its full voluntary acceptance. The suffering is held to be sent by God, and so imposed upon the good man. Thus the suffering is not yet seen to be something which he himself, with clear vision and full consent, resolves to bear. A later day has to bring this aspect into the foreground. Thus we have our prophet writing these words—

> "Yet it hath pleased Yahveh to bruise him.
> He hath put him to grief.
> When Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
> He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days.
> And the pleasure of Yahveh
> Shall prosper in his hand."

The prophet has not yet the full vision of the sufferer bruising himself and putting himself to grief. It is God, not the sufferer, who makes his soul an offering, and it is the pleasure of God and not of the sufferer that prospers. But it is a mighty leap forward when suffering begins to be thought of in this way.

The seed was cast into a soil not yet prepared to receive it. And the unfortunate Rabbinic way of treating such passages of the Old Testament as having bearing only on the coming Messiah, a method still in favour in many quarters, but very detrimental to a

more spiritual interpretation, has prevented the passage before us from being appreciated to its fullest extent. The prophet, truly viewed, is setting forth a principle for all life, the law of all worthy living. But in some concrete way, in a real human life, it had to be splendidly embodied before it could be seen in its essential universality. That is to say, the principle had to be lived out by One before it could be lived out by others, but by all followers of the One it had to be lived out. The truth and worth of the principle were not to be found in the fact that it was embodied in the Christ. The real state of the case was that it was adopted by the Christ because of its inner and eternal worth and truth.

The same principle, thus forecasted by the Greek tragedian and by Isaiah, was, in the advance of science, to be seen at work in even the lower and humbler forms of life, notably in the common daisy and in the guelder rose. Indeed, it is a principle "shot through all life," and finding its crown and culmination in the race, in man—

"The foremost in the files of time, and the heir of all the ages."

The seed thus sown had to lie hidden in the ground, even waiting many days for the fulness of the time when it might appear in all its ripeness. But this is the law of all progress: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Progress, however, has always been slow. There are times when it seems to make a long stride forward, and others when its step seems backward. "Nature works by progress," says Pascal. "It goes and returns, then it goes further,

then twice as much backward, then more forward than ever." In the long space of time between Isaiah and Christ, the truth of the prophet seems to have been little thought of, though, doubtless, it was working like leaven in the meal. So from the days of Christ until now, how little attention has been given to what is the essential law of all life, that of sacrifice for the common weal! But even in the darkest times the best in mankind flashed forth its rays of light, and what was once adumbrated will yet be accepted by all. It was said by Goethe:—

> "A good man, through obscurest aspirations,
> Has yet an instinct of the one true way."

Generations had to come and go before the truth and full significance of the glory of vicarious suffering could be understood or grasped by the world as it so very slowly emerged from the selfishness of nature into the loving service inspired by grace.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The View that Suffering is Largely Preventable

In the last chapter we have been dealing chiefly with the sufferings that the good have to take up and to bear. But it is obvious that on every hand there is a large amount of suffering that they can not be called upon to bear in any way, and also a large degree of suffering that is caused by man to others, and which is most certainly something that should be prevented. When our attention is directed to the sufferings of the world and their vast extent, it is of great importance that they should be carefully examined in regard to their nature and their causes.

And, first of all, there are those sufferings which men bring upon themselves by their own evil-doing. Either by ignorance or intention they break the laws of God in relation to those moral requirements on which all social relationships depend, and those other laws which concern their health of mind and body. In the first case they become wrong-doers or criminals, and bring upon themselves the punishments determined by the laws of the land. They suffer the consequence of their doings. Such sufferings are not sent by God to punish men, but are the direct result of their own doing. They may be more or less severe according to the

nature of the civilization in the midst of which they live, and they may be more or less mitigated by the measures adopted by the community. But all these sufferings, less or more, are directly traceable to the conduct of the individual. His action may not be altogether blameworthy, but it is the occasion of the suffering, and all actual wrong-doing carries in itself its own suffering. It has its own reaction on the doer. Of course we know that wrong-doers often escape the outward sufferings of their deeds, and others suffer all in innocence. The presence of wrong-doing, however, is the cause of a vast amount of suffering. Here the definite cause can be traced, and no problem about the incidence of suffering is raised with any good ground at all. Probably wrong-doing is the supreme cause of a far greater amount of suffering than actually appears to be traceable to known deeds of wrong. If the life of men was ordered according to the Divine requirement, and the laws of God were kept, how much less suffering there would be in the world than there is now!

But, secondly, there is the suffering which arises from the violation of the laws of health, and this is very great. It also may spring either from set purpose or from ignorance. There are those who knowingly break the laws of health through self-indulgence in what they manifestly see to be ways hurtful to their bodies. They don't care, and run risks. Samuel Butler, in his "Erewhone," or Nowhere as yet, has dwelt upon the view that sickness is a crime, and, consequently, urges the duty that all should observe those conditions in which health may be secured. It was declared by the Judge in his famous trial that the

person charged with pulmonary disease was "bad and dangerous, and stood branded in the eyes of his fellow-men with one of the most heinous of known offences." No one should be allowed to "think lightly of all forms of disease," but should indeed have a deep sense of personal responsibility for their existence, and especially for their continuance. But most certainly in the vast majority of cases it is ignorance that leads men and women to do so many things that only bring upon themselves and others intensest sufferings. The nature and functions of the body are only being increasingly known. We do not know that we have certain organs until something happens to them which we can trace. It is strange that so little attention is given to instruction in regard to the laws of health, and so much to the histories of dead dynasties and decayed civilizations of bygone days. If the wise maxim, *Mens sana in corpore sano*, was really believed in, would not far more concern be given to the securing of a healthy mind and a healthy body? Disease and sickness of every kind is increasingly being traced to their causes by medical science. Should not these be thoroughly taught in our schools, so that all carelessness and vague talk about chance and accident should be put an end to, and in this way, also, a great amount of suffering be caused to cease.

The great surgeon, Sir F. Treves, has pointed out that pain or suffering, in its first indication, is not a calamity but a blessing, insomuch that it is a danger signal calling attention to the existence of something wrong or out of order in the body. It is a symptom, and urges the need of something being done at once in

the way of cure. And he warned men against merely ameliorative remedies that dealt only with the symptoms. A deep and radical treatment is required. Gellert, the faithful hound, gave earnest warning, but was misunderstood and killed.

And when doctors have been enabled to ascertain the exact germs from which disease has sprung they have been able, in a wonderfully successful manner, to discover the effective cure, the particular anti-toxin required. Their deepest conviction is that every disease has its own cause, which can be discovered and adequately dealt with. When dealing with the erroneous view that evil was inherent in matter and had therefore some fixed character, we saw how different that opinion was from that which now dominates the medical world. The belief is strong that all disease should be prevented; and thus the supreme crusade initiated by Christ, to banish sickness and all the suffering that follows it, is being carried out. He not only bade His disciples go and preach the gospel, but also heal the sick. He refused to allow the view to be held that evil demons were the masters of the situation, and thus the medical profession are the truest servants of Christ, and medical science the best handmaid of His religion. Unfortunately, in the early centuries of the Church, the emphasis was laid almost entirely upon the forming of creeds, a disruptive endeavour rather than a unifying one. The healing ministry was entirely overlooked by the Church, to the great loss of a suffering world, and the diminution of the influence of the Church.

This mistake of the past has led in our days to the

necessary reaction, which would place the emphasis entirely on the healing side. And among recent movements in this direction Christian Science (so called) has been much in vogue, and healing by faith. The strange demand has been made that the sick person should not believe that he is sick, because sickness is a negative thing, and one, therefore, that can have no existence in a world ruled by a good God. No doubt this view has been of value in very many nervous cases, for it bids the sufferer get above a wrong view of what they deem their troubles, but in very many others it is a serious error to neglect the danger signals of pain. This, however, is abundantly true, that whatever leads men to believe in the goodness and healing power of God is all to the benefit of the race. Certainly no disease can come from Him, and we may well be sure that all Divine resources are continually being employed to bring about healing.

And every conviction in this direction has been fully encouraged by the successes of medicine; for, by discovering the germ of a disease and placing the sufferer in those circumstances where healing may be secured many diseases that once were common have been practically eliminated. No longer do plagues, like the black death, cholera, typhus, and smallpox, abound as in former days. All these have virtually ceased among us. And against diseases like phthisis and cancer the most vigorous crusade is being waged. Soon it may be hoped that what have been regarded as necessary troubles of our children, like whooping-cough and measles, may be eradicated.

In former days the almost cruel maxim was much

used that "the gods love those that die young." Against our infantile mortality most strenuous efforts have been made in recent times, and it has been wonderfully reduced. The Old Testament prophet had a gracious vision of days when, in better and more normal conditions of life, such as we have no manner of doubt would be more in harmony with the Divine wish and purpose, "there shall be no more an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not fulfilled his days, for he that dieth at the age of an hundred years shall be deemed a child."

Death, indeed, is regarded as the enemy, and every endeavour made to look it in the face and gain a victory over it. We have referred to the protest of the heart against the death of little children, and we all feel the same protest against the death of young men of genius on their thresholds of high service. Doubtless, the heart is comforted by the certain assurance that such lives can never die, but must live on—

> "Breathers of an ampler day for ever nobler ends."

And yet the conviction is deep that such lives might have been preserved for greater service here if more had been known about the laws of health and heredity. They should not have died, we say, and in no sense of revolt against God, but with a throbbing sense of the wrong and imperfect ways in which men have lived. What surely is most of all to be longed for is the continuing of life to its fullest span, looking for the heavenly life in no despair of earth or in hope of reward, but that men with burnished swords and high capacity of service might be kept here to carry on the

tasks they had begun. We would say with Meredith with firm conviction—

> "Death is the word of a bovine day,
> Know you the breast of the springing to be?"

Medical science has been placing supreme importance upon conditions favourable to health, and especially upon suitable houses and a healthy parentage. It has been found impossible to rear a fit race in poor houses, and every effort is now being made to abolish the slums of our great cities where life is handicapped at every turn. The poet Burns, in so many ways a herald of better days, spoke thus—

> "Man's inhumanity to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn."

Our people have been worse housed than the horses and carriages of the rich. When it is being proved to the hilt that health is impossible in such conditions, the suffering flowing from them must have an end in the provision of better homes.

And, again, the light has been let in upon the matter of a pure and virile parentage. This too long has been neglected. Men and women have lived lives of impurity and self indulgence in racial poisons which have produced abortions, imbecile children, and also little ones wholly incapable of living a true life. The sin and cruelty of such lives are beginning to be realised. Better, purer, and less indulgent lives will bring about the happier time desired by Burns when—

> "A virtuous populace may rise the while,
> And stand a wall of fire around their much loved Isle."

And nature, which is carrying out the plan of God, is altogether misunderstood and misconstrued when it is called immoral or indifferent. These qualities can not truly be applied to a process. How absurd to blame nature for "disseminating the seeds of suffering, disease, and death." Looking at single events and not taking in a long view of the ongoing process of life, nature has seemed "red in tooth and claw and to shriek against our creed." It has been said

> "To grind out good, and grind out ill,
> To have no purpose, heart or will."

But, on the contrary, if we look calmly at things, we shall find a wondrous healing power in nature (the *vis naturæ medicatrix*), and even earthquakes and other natural phenomena can be understood and seen to be in harmony with law. Certain districts are volcanic, or subject to earthquakes, and people will be well advised to fix their dwellings in safer regions. In the past too often, as we have seen, sudden disaster has been called the "act of God," and men have failed to take the needful precautions to avoid great suffering. With supreme folly a giant liner, with more than a thousand lives on board, has been driven through an iceberg zone to certain destruction, or another has been sent through an ocean infested with submarine craft waiting for her. Such events do in no way bid us call in question the goodness of God or unsettle our faith in Him, but they do give us great reason to doubt the wisdom of man.

Among the most fruitful cause of suffering to society is that of the criminal classes. They war upon the community in its present constitution, and by causing

death and the destruction of property bring about much misery. But this is also a preventable cause, which, if wisely taken in hand, might be largely reduced, if not ultimately eliminated. It was truly said by Shakespeare that "Our remedies do oft within us lie." The criminal tendency could be dealt with in its first manifestations by adequate social enviroment, truer methods of education, and an efficient national medical service. And the continuance of crime, after a complete system of probation for all first offenders, could be dealt with by some effective method of detention, which would aim not so much at punishment but at reform, so that the detained person may be taught to support himself during his detention, and kept long enough out of former conditions as at the soonest opportunity to be set at liberty, with the capacity and desire to be a worthy citizen. The detention might be lifelong in some cases, but by depriving the few of their liberty, which they had shown their inability to use wisely, using it only to prey on society, the whole community would gain. Huxley saw clearly that the worth of the individual lay in his power to contribute to the well-being of society. Where that is absent full liberty cannot be enjoyed. The supreme law of the State must always be its own safety, and to the securing of this in wise and efficient measures every means must be used. The supposed right of the individual to liberty in an organised State, whatever be his character, health of mind or body, or his conduct, must be seen to be an exploded myth.

War itself, which all down the ages has taken such a toll of life and treasure, and caused such terrible

suffering, is but an illustration of man's "inhumanity to man."

Men have often in despair and melancholy complained of

> "The heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,"

when it was not the world which was wrong, but their own view of things in the world and the ruin they were only too often making. Tennyson in his "Ancient Sage" very truly says:—

> "My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
> So dark that men cry out against the heavens—
> Who knows but that the darkness is in man?"

It was the fault that Shakespeare makes "Hamlet" commit of thinking

> "Too precisely on the event."

This is the mistake we are ever apt to make, and the overwhelming suffering of the moment blinds our eyes to the vision of the true meaning of life at such a time all hidden from them. The individual may have

> "An eye to which all order festers, all things are out of joint."

It is difficult to get men to cease speaking about accident and chance in life; for when they fail to know the cause of any event, they immediately think of it as wholly strange and unaccountable. But this is not right. The fact that we do not know a particular cause is no justification for speaking of there not being one capable of yet being discovered. What we should therefore aim at is a fuller knowledge, and in the

meantime we should possess our souls in patience. Statements about the accidental and incalculable should be avoided. Our disappointments, which cause us much sorrow and even suffering, because we build up so much of our life's arrangements on them, are really the result of wrong appointments based on our ignorance or shortsightedness. These we should not make in haste. We also talk vaguely about possibilities, forgetting that all things move according to the law of causality.

Where failure has met our endeavours in the past we have no right to hold that failure will always be our lot. Past failure only bids us realise that we have pursued wrong methods or gone in ways that are imperfect. And surely we can never speak of failure in the case of God. There never can be failure when there is perfect knowledge, and yet God has been spoken of as failing. He has been supposed by men to have set His mind upon accomplishing a certain result in a definite way. The failure here is not on the part of God, but wholly on our side, for we have limited the Divine working by our own ideas. In the same way the thought of a "struggling God" is altogether unworthy. God is ever working on to His perfect goal, when all the causes of evil and suffering in human life shall be removed, and it is man's highest prerogative and joy to place himself in line with this supreme Divine purpose. This he can do with fullest, gladdest consent when knowledge becomes his in fullest measure.

The main cause of suffering in the world is undoubtedly opposition to the Divine purpose, which man refuses to acknowledge or fails to see at work. The error man continually makes is to give dogmatic form

to his opinions, as if any finality belonged to these. Forgetting to see that he has reached no final interpretation of the Divine purpose at any moment he yet makes assertions with great confidence concerning what God is at any such time wishing or doing, and he acts accordingly. In so doing he moves not in accordance with the Divine will, but simply in harmony with his own view. Some corrective of the action of the individual is here required, and this can only be reached by suspension of judgment and fuller conference with others.

The danger of an unwise assertion of the right of conscience has been often seen. For the liberty claimed has been that the individual is capable of judging aright in all circumstances. Hence we have the modern protest of the Pragmatists and Bergson against a false finalism. The sudden claim of rights has not unfrequently been made without a due sense of the responsibility of duty. Men may not yet be ready for all that the possession of rights implies, and a premature conferring of privilege may lead only to great abuse. If as Eucken has pointed out, there is a rash liberation of man's powers, these may be, as they have been, "to a large extent enlisted in the service of selfishness and in general of petty human interests, and thereby diverted from their true ends."

The acquiescence of the individual in the Divine purpose must not be simply in his own interpretation of what is best, for the purpose of God may require a supreme abandonment of all that he holds most true. Bergson does not deny the real presence of purpose in the world, but he strenuously contends against a static

interpretation of that purpose. And surely we feel too that the Divine purpose is a dynamic force in history ever making for something better. No *status quo*, no convention, or dogma should have a fixed or static acceptance. To give it that is only to rebel against God, and to bring about a suffering which it is the aim of His working to prevent.

And just as the individual rebels against God and causes suffering, so the assertion of the part against the whole in the same way leads to unnecessary and so preventable suffering. Life is to be viewed in its wholeness, and society in its solidarity. This is the great thought which is ever influencing modern science in its best movements. The whole is "knit together by what every part supplieth." There is a true social union and brotherhood in life. No part should claim something for itself at the expense of the whole. And yet it is just this false claim that has been continually made, and so wrought such untold suffering. The individual has forgotten that he is but a part of a throbbing whole. The claim of the weakest and apparently most insignificant part cannot be ignored, and hence Mrs. Browning has touchingly said—

> "The child's sob in the silence curses deeper
> Than the strong man in his wrath."

It has also been one of the supreme causes of suffering in the past that one "half of the world did not know how the other half lived"; but this is no longer possible. An awakened social conscience is bidding men care "for the things of others," and in this sublime caring there will be a mighty healing force set free,

which with preventive power will bring about a better, happier state than what now exists, and put an end to much of the suffering that prevails, and which undoubtedly lies at the back of the unrest of to-day, with its unstable equilibrium. Instead of each part pursuing its own good it must think of the good of the whole. In other words, competition must end, and co-operation of a true kind begin. In vain will any hope of betterness be entertained as long as "the worm self slavers at the root."

Suffering thus in all its forms is alien to the purpose and plan of God and to the constitution of things. Efforts to remove it, and much more to prevent it, are truly Divine. "Prevention is better than cure." The call to-day is for men to save others, and not themselves. There is to be no withdrawing from life, no shirking of its pressing duties; no losing of oneself in some mystic way in the whole; no soaring aloft or lifting oneself above the common world in the regions of art and culture, as in Goethe's thought; no mere pitying of the lot of others, but a strong and united effort on the part of all for the good of the whole and of every part. Each part will then find its own worth and value just in the measure in which it contributes to the well-being of the other parts. No man can live merely, like the old Stoic, in his own sense of self-sufficiency, but, moved with an infinite sympathy, he must live in the actual world of life, and seek to raise it in every part to higher things.

While in earlier times there was a wondrous and most praiseworthy effort directed towards the healing of the sores of the body politic, there is in our most

modern days the higher crusade to remove the causes of suffering, and so prevent its coming about. While we formerly rejoiced in the curing of disease in our splendidly equipped hospitals, we shall in future be led to rejoice, as Newman anticipated, more in creating those conditions in which such institutions shall be rendered almost unnecessary.

Thus the truer worthier view of the Divine, and the sense of the mutual responsibility of all will work together for the bringing about of a better world here and now, which shall have its crowning success in the ultimate outcome of the prevention and elimination of suffering so that at the last, it may be the long last, "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick," and when there shall be "nothing to hurt or destroy" in all the land, "for the knowledge of God shall cover the land as the waters cover the sea." Then indeed shall there be the manifest dwelling of God in His people, "when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

## CHAPTER IX

### The Meaning of Suffering in the Light of Christ's Teaching.

In our two last chapters we have been gradually approaching what we believe to be the final solution of the problem of suffering. We found a striking forecasting of this solution in the views of Euripides and in the teaching of the great prophet of the Restoration. Then, finally, we were impressed with the aspect of suffering which bade us realise that so much of it was preventable. The consideration came before us, also, that much suffering came to men owing to the wrong-doing either of themselves or of others. But so far we have not found any satisfying explanation of those sufferings which the truly good have to endure. Those explanations which bade us see in them some punishment or discipline, some test or mystery, were all found to be inadequate. Some truer meaning is therefore required which would do justice to the essential worth of suffering, and show how it works for the benefit of the whole community. We now proceed to deal with suffering in the light shed upon it and upon all human life by the teaching of Jesus the Christ. What, in other words, is the meaning of suffering in the light of His teaching?

But here, on the very threshold of our enquiry, this difficulty meets us, that it is not easy, amid the many

creeds of Christendom and the manifestly divergent customs of the churches, to discover what might be held with one consent to be the chief teaching of Jesus. This truly shows the need there is for a supreme coming together of all who bear the name of Christ, that so some common and united presentation of the Master's teaching might be given to the world.

Not being able to look to the creeds of the Church here for help we have to make an endeavour to find out just exactly what was the spirit which He breathed into the hearts of men, and which has been increasingly at work down all the Christian ages, shaping life and conduct, and ever seeking a fuller and better expression for itself. The meaning of any new teacher, and the worth of His teaching, is always to be found in the leaven-like power which it has in itself to influence succeeding generations. Truth is ever vital and enduring. We must therefore find out the contribution which Christ made to the true understanding of life.

Now, the spirit of the teacher rests upon the principle of life which he made his own, and under the power of which he lived out his life. That principle must be seen at work in his own way of thinking and acting. It must not be one of many principles, but some one dominant principle of controlling power bringing all other principles under its influence. In other words, it must be that which differentiates him from all other teachers, and is distinctly characteristic of him alone if he is to have a permanent place among the supreme teachers of the world. We have seen how the Buddha had some such teaching, and how Sophocles had. What is to distinguish Christians from other men must

be their loyalty to the principle which Christ definitely accepted for Himself and enjoined upon His followers. To be loyal to Christ implies the acceptance of the principle of His life. Can we then find out what that principle is? In trying to do this we must press through all creeds and institutions, so that we may discover what Christ exactly stood for, and stands for to-day. What was His principle, and what is the one essential principle of the life of all His followers?

Here we are not concerned with any creed or institution in which His principle has found expression more or less perfectly; we are concerned with Himself and His principle. We are not to deal with the many gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth, or with the life of goodness and tender compassion which He lived, but we are to go very much deeper. We are to ask ourselves what made Him the mighty influence He has become in our world's story. What was it that determined His whole course of life? What was His secret, His inner purpose, His real outlook on life? If there is in Him a revelation of the Divine, wherein did that lie? What was the Divine to Him?

He was far and away above His reporters. Their records, however valuable in giving to us the account of what they deemed most important in His life, did not, in so many words, set forth His life principle. That was left to the Church to discover and state. But as is the case with all institutions and creeds, only some aspects of the manifoldness of Jesus were dealt with and expressed. And too much time and attention were given to questions of less concern, to secondary issues, and in this way the one transcendent principle of His

personality did not receive its true and rightful place. It was thought to be enough to believe His teaching and to be initiated into His Church. It was not sufficiently recognised that there must be a receiving of His spirit, so that men might actually live in the world as He lived. Men were asked what they thought of Him, instead of being like Him. Indeed, Christ was so exalted and adored that He was far removed from the very humanity He had come to redeem and save. His Divineness, in which He had brought God near to men in splendid reconciling power, only seemed to put Him further away from mankind. Very special value attaches to what is practically the last writing of the New Testament, the fourth gospel, called by Clement "a spiritual gospel." For in it the sublime thought is set forth that the life of Christ is to be in the men who accept Him as the sap is in the tree. He is the true Vine and they are branches in Him. Separated from Him and His life-giving spirit, they would be able to do nothing. They would be dead, fruitless branches.

To find what we are seeking we turn to an extremely interesting account of an episode in the life of Christ which is reported to have occurred at Cæsarea Philippi (Matthew xvi. 13-25). We have here before us what really seems to have been a crisis time to the apostolic band. They now for the first time appear to have come at least to a partial understanding of their Master's mind. Through the mouth of Peter, their outspoken leader, they had recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah, but what that implied they did not realise at the time, nor perhaps for a long time after. The Master laid a prohibition upon them, forbidding them to proclaim abroad that He was the Messiah.

From that time, however, He began to tell them that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer at the hands of the Jews, and be put to death. Such a view of what the Messiah was to be was wholly different from that which was commonly held by the rulers and people. With the current view the apostles agreed, and a loud protest was at once raised against the idea that the Messiah should be a sufferer. It was a thought abhorrent to the mass of men then, and to the mass of men in every successive age, that the deliverance of mankind could only be secured by voluntary suffering. The anticipation of the Jews was that the Messiah who had been promised to their nation was to be a conquering King. To such a one they held that the Old Testament prophecies pointed forward. He was to come as God's servant to drive out the hated Romans, and re-establish the throne of David in glory. Force was to be the means used, and He was to wade through the blood of many slain, not through His own blood to His kingly dignity. This hope is clearly set forth in the song of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist,

> "That we should be saved from our enemies,
> And from the hand of all that hate us."

The new King was to be like all other kings, and His kingdom was to be a Jewish kingdom, differing from other kingdoms only in being one specially favoured by God. And after the death of Christ there still lingered the idea that the kingdom "might be restored to Israel." Many of the prophecies of the coming king could indeed be thus interpreted, but only at the expense of other features closely associated with them.

Zechariah foretells the coming of the king, but he speaks of him coming on an ass. The early prophecy of Isaiah of Jerusalem forecasts the coming Messiah, but how different is He to be from kings as commonly understood. They used war material, but to Him all this would only be for burning. He was to be the King of Peace, and His government one of righteousness. What a splendid ideal of a true Messianic king have we in such words, which tell us of one that is to be "an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as rivulets of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And think of the moral and spiritual qualities of the promised king in Psalm lxxii.

But there was another and higher line of prophecy given to us in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, on which we have already dwelt. In this passage the ideal king is to be the supreme sufferer, who would take upon himself the burden of the sin and sorrow of men. This truly was the ideal of the Messiah which Jesus adopted and made His own in all its deep and wondrous significance. But the truth taught by Isaiah was altogether ignored in current thought. The teaching of Isaiah concerning the suffering Messiah had indeed been largely adopted by the Maccabees, who were themselves supreme sufferers for their people, for it was held by many that the purification of Israel was accomplished by the "self immolation of the Maccabæan heroes." But the later Judaism current in the time of Christ had not accepted the teaching of Isaiah. There was shown "a jealousy from the first of the ancient conception of vicarious suffering, so easy of misapplication in an

antinomian sense." Jesus, therefore, had a specially difficult task before Him. He had to wean the people from a false idea of the nature and function of the Messiah, and this is always more difficult than that of teaching new truth. The moment He spoke about the Messiah His hearers thought of their own petty ideals, and were therefore prevented from listening to one who was not only telling them what was the true ideal according to the teaching of their greatest prophet, but also living it out before their very eyes.

Thus Jesus found His master-thought not in the strange apocalyptic literature which had appeared, or in the way in which the Rabbis taught the Messiah would come, but in the pure and undefiled source of high prophetic teaching. He saw clearly and steadily that the only hope of a Divinely promised and Divinely endued Messiah could only be fulfilled in One who would, in a willing, loving way, take upon Himself the world's burden, and endure whatever suffering that might involve. This view He had to teach His disciples, and through them the world. It was in the spirit of a perfect self-sacrifice that He entered upon life, and met its pressing duties.

Two other passages may be quoted from the New Testament in confirmation of the point of view thus taken up by Jesus. In the first, we find the Apostle Paul (Phil. ii. 5-11) telling us that the mind of Jesus was His renouncing all right and privilege that He might claim as His own, and resolving upon a life of service even involving death. Though this is described as humbling Himself, He saw in it His highest glory. And the second passage supplies us with a vivid account

of the supreme temptation presented to the spirit of Jesus. When, after the baptism, and His consecration to His life work, He felt Himself truly the Son of God, the choice was brought before His mind of two ideals: the one of claiming for Himself all honour, and the use of miracle to gain that end, and the other of self-sacrifice and the living of a true human life. He chose the latter. He definitely resolved to identify Himself with mankind, and to secure the deliverance of the race by bearing all that man had to bear. Whatever suffering would then be needful He was ready to meet with gladness.

In the last gospel He is represented as glorying in His approaching death, and saying, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The way of the Cross (*via crucis*) was to be the way of light (*via lucis*); and in full view of the culmination of all that He had already suffered, His prayer is, "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."

In the olden days, as we have seen, suffering was associated with shame. It was a punishment and a disgrace. A curse was attached to hanging on a cross; but now all this is changed, and a glory is found even in intensest suffering. It may be counted all joy. Thus sorrow is turned into joy, and the cross becomes a crown. Tennyson beautifully puts it thus—

> "I met with scoffs, I met with scorns,
> From youth and babe, and hoary hairs,
> They called me in the public squares
> The fool that wears a crown of thorns."

But he goes on to tell of the Divine transformation brought about—

> "They called me fool, they called me child;
> I found an angel of the night,
> The voice was low, the look was bright;
> He looked upon my crown and smiled.
>
> "He reached the glory of a hand
> That seemed to touch it into leaf,
> The voice was not the voice of grief
> The words were hard to understand."

Hard to understand! Even yet after all that Christ has taught!

We have spoken of the way in which Euripides had, along with Isaiah, forecasted the true meaning of suffering in the case of the pure and the good, but this has clearly to be stated that on the part of these great prophetic men, there was only a representation of what they thought should be the attitude to be taken up. We have no record, for example, of Iphigeneia actually saying what the tragedian put into her mouth. It is but a deep prophetic forecasting. No example was forthcoming, and so the words of them both remained so long unfulfilled. But when we come to Jesus we find not merely One Who taught men the right way, but much more One Who lived out all He taught, and thus gave concrete embodiment and an authority all its own to what He taught. His "I say," was the expression of His life, and so He taught with authority, and not as other teachers before and after Him.

The highest importance must also be placed upon the completely voluntary nature of the suffering borne. There must be no external restraint, no obligation of

any kind outside the free action of the individual, no decree, no oracle or prophecy to be fulfilled. To give moral and spiritual worth to the action, it must be done with fullest consent and in harmony with what the individual feels to be the highest law of life bound up with the very constitution of things. It must not be something of a highly meritorious kind, done to secure good to the individual himself, but solely because it is the right thing to do, and for some end in no way capable of being fulfilled otherwise. It must not be self-inflicted, as was the suffering of a fakir or monk; it must come purely, because the individual is discharging a duty which emerges out of the vocation which he has freely chosen for himself. The necessity for his action, with all the consequences which flow from it, must lie within his own breast. What dominates within his thought must be the greatness and splendour of the end to be brought about. There must be no throwing away of effort or life. The life of the individual must be appreciated, and its "eternal significance" realised. If a supreme sacrifice is called for, it must be shown that the purpose justifies such a call.

We can in no way underestimate sufferings undertaken for a worthy end, even though they be small indeed. The misery of one individual for some noble end has in itself its own intrinsic worth. It cannot be disregarded in any way, as if it were part of the common lot of man.

Nor dare there be any overvaluing of the life of the individual. The sin of the world has resulted, as we have seen, from the manner in which individuals have

sought to exploit others for their own good. If such sin is to end, a new principle, even that of love for others, must be seen at work. How true it is!

> "Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all its chords with might—
> Smote the chord of self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

And Nietzsche, pouring contempt on mere empty pity truly adds, "All great love is above all its pity, for it seeketh to create what it loves." And in this there is joy. "What asketh the load-bearing spirit, what is the heaviest thing that I may take it upon me, and rejoice in my strength?" We would not speak with Carlyle of the worship of suffering, but much rather of its inner worth and glory, and then with him say, "Venture forward! The altar is still there and its sacred lamp perennially burning."

Now when Jesus declared that the true Messiah was to be the suffering Servant of God, and enshrined this ideal in Himself, He raised suffering to its highest level. He emphasised the absolute voluntariness required when He said, "My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He was the good shepherd so caring for His sheep that for them He placed His whole life at their service. When dealing with the passage in Isaiah, we saw that the emphasis lay on the manner in which God offered up His servant. Here the whole emphasis lies on the complete way in which Christ offers up Himself. He says again, "And for their sakes I dedicate Myself that they also might

be truly dedicated." (John xvii. 19.) He makes His dedication in a completely voluntary way in order that a similar dedication might be made by His followers.

In the holiest rite of the Christian Church there is the celebration and remembrance of this supreme sacrifice. The sacred words are used as His appealing words to us, "This is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of Me." And while there may be a holy remembering in the participation in the Sacrament, it is surely obvious that Christ looked forward to something of far greater importance than a rite, even to a continual willingness on the part of His followers to be themselves broken for men. Owing to the prevalence of the idea that in Christ's sacrifice there was some kind of legal satisfaction to Divine justice, which Christ alone could give, the obligation resting on His disciples has been only too largely forgotten, to the loss of the Church and of the world. Truly, "great wealth in memory lies," but only when he who remembers receives the spirit of him whom he remembers, and allows that spirit to be manifested in his whole manner of life. Hence, probably, there is no reference to the sacrament in the fourth gospel, written at a time when already an undue emphasis was being laid upon a rite. In this gospel the principle is brought into the foreground in such gracious words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood ye have no life in you." A continual eating and drinking is referred to, or, in other words, a complete identification of the Master and the disciple, not in some kind of outward manner, or in some unreal mystical way, but in the way of a real living experience, so that He and they shall live the same life all so Divine, as joint heirs together

with Him in the fellowship of suffering and in the joy of triumph.

There is no doubt that suffering has been too much associated with the idea of asceticism, so that the joyful aspect of suffering, freely endured for the deliverance and help of mankind, has not been sufficiently recognised. "Count it all joy," writes St. James, "when ye fall into divers trials." The religious life has been too much a cult of sorrow than a bright, cheerful service of God and mankind. Happiness has been sought. It has been the chief end of life to only too many. But when this is so, there is the great danger of forgetting the only way in which happiness can come, if it is to come at all. That way is the way of service of others, and this has its own reward in an exalted and happy sense of doing good to men. In his drama entitled "The Blue Bird," Maeterlinck has emphasized the important truth that happiness abounds on every hand, just because it accompanies the right discharge of life's common duties, and can be found in its ordinary experiences. The secret of happiness, he tells us, is not to be found for the seeking. The generality of men do not discover it, and yet happiness is always around us. In eating, drinking, waking up, breathing, and living, it is ever with us. Home life is crammed with happiness, and every day may be a Sunday. The great joy is that of loving. And is not virtue its own reward, its own glad guerdon?

"Glory of virtue to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong:
Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she.
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky.
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die."

Happiness and glory cannot lie in the possession of things that take wings and fly away. It must lie in the attitude of the mind to things, and the valuation it puts on them. Man never is, but always to be blest. Hence he must find his happiness in the way in which he applies the principles he holds dear to life, and finds in action an increasing measure of success. His rejoicing will be found in his power of transmuting the alloys of earth into the currency of heaven. Not, indeed, in any mere acceptance of life, but in a brave endeavour ever to make it better. To do this he adopts the principle of Christ, and he finds his experience truly described as "sorrowing and rejoicing," not as in two successive moments, but in a rich, deep experience, in which sorrow and joy are blended into a wondrous unity. Hence it has been said, that "To the good man there is nothing bad, whether in life or in death." And herein is "the everlasting Yea" of Carlyle, "Love not pleasure but God." And Goethe said, "It is with renunciation that life, properly speaking, begins."

If, perhaps, some one will ask, "Wherein lies the obligation of such a life?" and so call in question the essential contribution made by Christ to the interpretation of suffering and its meaning in the light of His teaching, and the profound altruism that links all life into one, it is sufficient to say, with Professor Sorley, that in this "we find not so much a different interpretation of the moral consciousness as a revolt against morality itself." Voluntary self-sacrifice has been once for all embodied in the perfect life, and that, in harmony with the best thought, the truest science, and

the profoundest morality, has given the norm for all worthy living, and the law by which all lives are being judged to-day. The value of the individual, we would again repeat, lies in the degree in which he contributes to the well-being of society. In this is also his joy and truest comfort.

We can never unduly emphasise the way in which the principle embodied in the life of Christ is in deepest and truest harmony with the highest teaching of science and philosophy. It does not stand alone as the principle of religion, but, on the contrary, is one and the same with that which is found in all worthy life. Hence the true scientific interpreter of nature, and the wisest thinker of any philosophic school, agree with the words of Jesus which declare His life principle. There is nothing arbitrary or isolated in the principle itself or in His adoption of it. Summing up an argument, Bosanquet concludes in this way: "And therefore it may be said that the general form of self-sacrifice—the fundamental logical structure of reality—is to be found here also, as everywhere." And Professor A. B. Bruce dwelt, in his Gifford lectures, on the truth that "The method of sacrifice is an integral part of the Providential Order. The law of sacrifice would then be brought within the range of scientific theory." And referring to Isaiah's chapter liii., he said that we have "not merely a prediction of what was to befall one unique victim, but the proclamation of a great general law of the Moral order under the form of an individual experience." This law is "an inevitable fact." Greville Macdonald, dealing with "The religious Sense in its scientific aspect," bids us see that the law of self-sacrifice

"is a great law supreme in all evolution," so that it is "by losing the life that we find it." And Huxley, to whom we have already referred, tells us that "Conscience is the watchman of society, charged to restrain the anti-social tendencies of the natural man within the limits required by social welfare." The ethically best requires that "the individual shall not merely respect but shall help his fellows."

Wherever, thus, we look we find the same testimony to the essential truth and obligation of the principle of voluntary and vicarious suffering adopted as His own by Christ. In its acceptance by all lies the hope of the race.

The very nature and character of God are discovered by us when we know the best and highest manifestation of the spirit of man. We rise of necessity from our contemplation of the best in Nature and in mankind to the discernment of what must be in God, and that in its highest form. If, then, we have found the principle of self-sacrifice dominant in all the truest life as proved by philosophy, religion, and science, shall we not above all find this principle in God Himself? Our best is but the reflection of His best; our best is raised in Him to its highest power. God Himself must be love, and that in its purest expression of self-sacrifice.

In other words, what we find in Christ is the revelation of the Divine. The God in Whom we now believe, and before Whom in reverence we can bow is a God Whose heart suffers for mankind, nay, for the whole universe, so that He endures the intensest suffering to secure the perfecting of all things, which is the realisation of the purpose of goodness which He has formed,

and to the complete carrying out of which all things move. The love of the One takes upon Himself the perfecting of the Other, and at highest cost securing this His joy is made complete. Hence He could say of Christ, "Thou art My well-beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." For in doing what He did for the world's salvation He did what God was doing. There was in the coming of Christ with fullest consent of love a giving and a sending by God the Father, also with fullest consent of love of His best, even His own Son. Hence we have the sublime conviction of the gospel proclaimed by the Church to be that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

> "So through the thunder comes a human voice,
> Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> But love I gave thee with Myself to love,
> And thou must love Me Who have died for thee.'"

But this supreme principle, which Christ accepted and embodied in Himself must not remain in any way alone, either in Himself or in the life of the few, those rare and noble spirits, who are the salt of the earth and its highest glory. It must find complete embodiment in the whole body of those who take upon themselves the Name of Christ, and who trace to Him as their source the blessings they enjoy. Hence there was founded a kingdom or Church, which was to be distinguished from every other society by its possessing this mark in all its true members, that it had the spirit of Christ. The Master "announced Himself," as the

author of "Ecce Homo" well emphasised, "as the Founder and Legislator of a new Society," under an immense obligation to Himself, and "the very self-denial which had guided His own life was prescribed as the principle which should guide theirs." If, then, the purpose which lay at the very foundation of the Church had been in any adequate manner carried out, the course of the world would have been so different. Unfortunately, too much attention was give to doctrine and its expression in a creed, and too little to the all-essential condition insisted on by the Master. Men were called upon to accept a sound creed, and their assent to this was made the mark of membership in the Church. A fuller, clearer realisation of what the Church was to be, and of the function which it was to serve, would have insisted that exact agreement on details of doctrine should have taken the second place, and that loyalty to the Master in the distinct carrying out of His life principle should have been dominant. What the world waits for to-day, and without which it cannot be at rest, is a Christian Church throbbing in its every part with the mighty life power associated with union to Christ, and received just in the measure that its members accept, not beliefs about Christ, but that vital belief in Him which makes that principle, which was seen so splendidly illustrated and magnified in Him, all their own.

## CHAPTER X

### The Meaning of Suffering from the Christian Standpoint Illustrated in Life

Having now set forth the meaning of suffering in the light of Christ's life and teaching, it remains for us to show in what way, in the sufferings of the pure and innocent, the principle of voluntary self-sacrifice works out in the various relationships and circumstances of time.

In a previous chapter we saw how a large amount of suffering was being prevented by the discovery of its causes and the spread of knowledge, which enabled healing measures to be adopted and improved conditions of living to be brought into being. And the success of science raised in our hearts a great hope of a better day. "Other men laboured, and we have entered into their labours," only to carry these on to higher achievements. We also saw how many of the sufferings of life were brought about by wrong-doing springing largely from ignorance, or from social conditions, or even in more pronounced cases from positive wickedness. But many of these sufferings fell upon the innocent and loving bound up with evil-doers in the bundle of life. And much of life's suffering arises from what we call accident, or what we fail to recognise as the laws of nature. Ignorance here has to be decreased by the

knowledge of causes and the understanding of the world in which we live. But over and above all these illustrations of suffering we have to note that a large amount of suffering on the part of the pure and the good arises from their own voluntary actions in the purposed endeavour to do good to their fellows, by bearing their burdens and seeking to lessen their sorrows.

This leads us to make a very important distinction between sufferings that come upon men and women without their consent, and those that might not have been met at all, but which have been endured as the result of some brave action undertaken with clear vision and fullest consent. The way in which the principle of sacrifice works in these two distinct classes of sufferers requires careful consideration.

The same principle, indeed, can be discovered in operation, but it must be sought for so that true comforting may be found, and that the glory of the suffering borne may be seen. It has been well pointed out by Harnack that it was the "new truth derived from the Cross of Christ which flowed out like a stream of fresh water on the arid souls of men and their dry morality." That living stream we must seek to trace. We must see how it wends its course among all classes of innocent sufferers.

First of all we would deal with those who suffer in innocence, and who have in no way brought their sufferings upon themselves. We can more easily see how the glory of suffering may be shared by those who in brave endeavours brought their sufferings upon themselves, but what about those who suffer in

innocence, and who had no manner of part in causing what they suffer? They have no fault; the suffering does them no good, and in many cases it abides with them all their days. There is for them no hope of healing. Shall we tell them that their suffering is wholly a mystery, and bid them to endure what they suffer in calm resignation? Surely some better word of true comforting lies within our power to speak to them!

We think of the thousands of little children born into this world with some racial poison in their veins from the moment of their birth. Many become blind or deaf, or imbecile, or maimed, and this because of the impure or self indulgent lives of their grand-parents or parents. As we behold the array of such sufferers, what are we to say to them? Their cases appeal to us with a wondrously pathetic power. We can do nothing to make them better, though we can indeed soothe them by our kindly words and helpful hands. But can we not do even more? Can we not give them some share in the glory of the suffering which is their lot, by showing them how, even in such involuntary suffering, they may become the true means of bringing to an end the causes and conditions which have brought it all about? As they lie before us in their helpless and appealing innocence do they not move every beholder really, saying so urgently, "See what I suffer now from evil causes! Can you look at my case and not feel that I am passing through this terrible ordeal in order that you may go forth from my presence resolved in a way you have never been before to labour for the removal of all that has thrown me into this state? Am I not a martyr indeed and for the highest of causes? I can

suffer thus if all who see me come to the holy determination that I shall not suffer in vain. I would, therefore, hand over to you a great crusade. I appeal to you, by the amount of pain and calamity that you see in me, that you go forth immediately to enlighten the community at large about the dangers to the coming generation of existing evil conditions, which have done such untold harm and hurt to the past and present generations, that so bad housing, insanitary areas, and impure or self-indulgent living may all have an end put to them. This you can do, and from my bed of pain I call upon you to do it at once."

Such appeals have told upon thousands, and their force is increasingly being felt. Very much has been done to remove evil conditions, and more will yet be done, until the young will be less handicapped in their coming into the world, and infantile mortality and suffering be reduced to a vanishing amount. That being so, every sufferer may feel that he is doing something to secure highest good for his successors, and so take up the burden of their lot in a voluntary spirit. As he can say, I suffer for others, his is the carrying out of the Christ principle, and all the glory of suffering when its meaning is thus discovered. Such innocent sufferers may have the joy of vicarious suffering, even in trouble not brought upon them by themselves, which is the possession of all noble souls.

But we now come to the second class of sufferers. They are those who have brought their sufferings upon themselves by their own voluntary action. They might have done otherwise. In the presence of the evils of the world, and conscious of how much the truest good

of others around was being hindered by vested interests and selfish indifference, they might have remained in their sheltered cloisters, but this they did not do. Like their Master, they felt the needs of dying men, and they heard the call to come forth. To all such the highest glory belongs. Like the tallest towers, they are the first to be visited by the lightning flash, and in their efforts to succour others their pain, all self-imposed, is the acutest possible.

We would cause those splendid men and women, who were compelled by their own goodness to endure suffering for others, to pass before our view. These form the "great cloud of witnesses" who compass us on every side, "men once like us with suffering tried, but now with glory crowned." Their names are written with imperishable ink upon the Roll of the Immortals, of "whom the world was not worthy," but who have given to the world all the worth which it contains. With an ever open eye, a deeply unselfish and responsive heart, and a splendid fulness of choice, they took up a determined stand, and made up "the noble army of martyrs," a glorious band, who counted not their "lives dear unto them," that they might fulfil the vocation they had chosen, and which they valued above all else. Mothers, Comrades, Soldiers, Patriots, Reformers, Martyrs all, we greet you! We have often seen you bleeding and dying

"To open up a pathway to the common place."

Yours has been pain brought upon yourselves in the best of causes! For your children, your friends, your country, and for the truth, you have passed through the hottest fires, and live on in glorious memory.

The mother heart leads the way ever in the progress of the race to better, happier conditions for mankind. Hers is the travail pain that ushers the new life into the world, and hers the long and anxious vigils for her infant. She risks her life for her child, and for his sake endures long years of anxiety and self-denying labour, which never can be repaid by the best of us. He who can in some measure reverence his mother will be a man to whom the highest values will be dear, and to whose hands can be left with confidence the shaping of peoples. Much, indeed, of a mother's sufferings can be lessened, and is being lessened by purer lives and happier conditions of life, but ever foremost in the ranks of the loving and the good, who care most of all for others, will be placed by the true and the noble the mother who bore them.

> "A mother is a mother still,
> The holiest thing alive."

The highest honour has been given by the Church to the Madonna and her Child. For Christ put a little child in the midst, and the child has remained there ever since, the best asset of any people. No greater service can be done to the world than what is done to the child, and in the triumphal procession to the better day "a little child shall lead them." The hand that rocks the cradle does infinitely more for a nation than any other agency for its real uplift. And a Eunice and a Monica have held highest place among the mothers of the world. Christ ever bore testimony to His mother's worth. Hers is a forgetfulness of self all Divine.

Ibsen, in one of his plays, supplies us with the following dialogue. Martha says to Johann :—

"I have been a mother to that wronged child, and brought her up as well as I could."

To which she replies, "And sacrificed your whole life in doing so."

"No, indeed," says Martha. "It has not been thrown away."

Anna, in Tolstoi's novel, exclaimed, "I am glad to give my life that it may be useful to somebody." Truly the life process around us, which is ever fulfilling the purpose of God, is not alien to us, for "it is the medium for the production and perfection of goodness in finite minds." Mark Rutherford, touchingly describes the constant and self-sacrificing care of the mother heart, so habituated to kindness. "Did any mischief befall those they knew? Without any blaming they set about immediately repairing it with that silent promptitude of nature, which rebels not against a wound, but the very next moment begins the work of protection and recovery." As R. L. Stevenson writes :

> "For still the Lord is Lord of might;
> In deeds, in deeds He takes delight.
> Those He approves that ply the trade,
> That rock the child, that wed the maid,
> That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
> Sow gladness on the peopled lands."

The second illustration of the glory of suffering is that of the friend and comrade, who to save another not unfrequently risks and loses his own life. "Greater

love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends." He plunges at a spot where, by reason of some unguarded stream, a dear one, or even an utter stranger, is in danger of being drowned. Or at an unprotected, bridgeless railway crossing loses his life in the successful effort to snatch another from an approaching train. As we think of such great sacrifices, made necessary by the want of thought on the part of men, are we not bidden to see that timeous steps are taken to prevent other similar disasters? Alas! we wait for some calamity to awaken us to a sense of our public duty, before we protect a dangerous canal bank or build a railway bridge. A comrade's sacrifice for a single person is the salvation not of one, but perhaps of hundreds.

The soldier and the patriot soul afford us our third illustration. In our most recent days the whole world has been passing through the tragic times of war, and from countless homes the noblest and the best of our youth have eagerly gone forth, at the call of king and country, to fight for highest ideals, and to maintain the heritage bequeathed to them by honoured sires. For freedom, truth, chivalry, they drew the sword, and for such causes placed themselves in jeopardy on the "high places of the field." In a multitude of cases they made the supreme sacrifice of their lives, feeling thus the truth set forth in the lines—

> "For how can man die better than facing fearful odds,
> For the ashes of his fathers, and the temples of his gods."

His, indeed, was suffering endured in a voluntary way for others, and it was all lit up with a glorious light.

None hated war more than those who were in the midst of its horrors; and while they came forth under highest impulse, surely this vision was floating before their eyes, that they were fighting to end war, for that better time when "men would learn the art of war no more." Shall we not say with Abraham Lincoln on the plains of Gettysburg? "We have highly resolved that these dead shall not have died in vain." And will not some worthy remembrance of the heroic soldiers, truest patriots, who suffered, many in maimed activities all their days, as well as those who fell, of the heroic fathers and mothers, and wives, and dearest ones, who gave them up, be found in some effective League of Nations, which may surmount all petty national jealousies, and devise a way whereby the great sacrifices of war shall secure a lasting and an abiding peace among all the peoples, great and small? In what has been already accomplished in driving home to the heart and conscience of the world the folly and madness of war, there lies the promise of much more to follow. Those who suffer for the right have "a deeper sense of the significance of their experience" than any spectator can have. In that they have the comfort that is the portion of those who "are persecuted for righteousness sake." Theirs is "the kingdom of God, which is joy and peace in the Holy Spirit." Supreme indeed is the glory of all such!

Next on our Roll of the Immortals are the great Reformers of our race in all the departments of human activity. They have seen the evils of their own time, and they have refused to accept them as things that must continue. Visions of a better state of society

have ever been before their eyes. Their hopes have been called "Utopias," because there was as yet no place for them on the earth. They were held to be dreams, but is it not true that

> "Every thought that yet in greatness rose
> Was called an idle dream at first."

Theirs was the vision glorious, the "vision splendid," and "till the eye have vision," to quote Carlyle, "the whole members are in bondage." "Where there is no vision the people perish."

High-souled reformers in Church and State, with clear seeing and unquenchable devotion, have, at great suffering to themselves, resolved to end the causes of the ills they saw around them. But, in so resolving, they soon found themselves up against the mighty forces that were interested, for private gain, in maintaining the *status quo*, even with all its recognised abuses. And the official classes were their enemies. The bounds of knowledge had nevertheless to be advanced; traditions and dead institutions had to be removed, and a clearer, simpler statement of the truth had to be reached. With a high disinterestedness the Reformers moved on their way, and their joy was to know that, however long the full triumph hour might be delayed, their hopes were being in measure realised, and the old evils more and more condemned. In the den of lions in Babylon, the amphitheatre at Rome, in cruel torture chambers or inquisition dungeons, in faggot fires or sorest persecutions, yea, in spite of these, the martyr host moved on to victory, and they could rejoice in the coming day. "The blood

of the martyrs was the seed of the Church." For yet "the sowers and the reapers would rejoice together." Each generation enters into the labours of those who have gone before, and receiving from their hands an inheritance often the price of blood, and every way better than what they had obtained, bequeathed this sacred trust to those that followed them, in the sure expectation that, gaining thus high privilege, they would pass it on unstained, nay, made more perfect still by labours more abundant, and sacrifices even more complete.

In all these cases the sufferer has, and should have, increasingly some clear idea of the purpose being carried through by means of the suffering, so that he may give his full assent. If he reaches this a great light is thrown upon the whole matter. Our whole aim, indeed, has been to press the importance of the purpose being discovered; for whatsoever is purposeless is abhorrent to the mind.

Thus, in these several instances of outstanding vicarious suffering, all undertaken in such a voluntary way, we have sought to trace and illustrate the manner in which the principle of true self-sacrifice for the good of others has inspired, encouraged, and comforted the best in the history of the race. In this we would find, then, the real inner meaning of suffering as it falls upon the good and the true. What was forecasted in the olden days by prophet and by poet, expressive of the deepest aspirations of the heart, what has been discovered in the most advanced movements of science as it has been seen at work in all the processes of nature, a genuine mother love, the germ of highest altruism,

and the all-pervading law of renunciation and of service, and what was accepted as the principle and law of His own life by Jesus Christ, this is now increasingly being seen to be the law of all worthy living.

In the light of this principle it is felt all true life is to be controlled and guided. It is a law of universal sweep, and admits of no exceptions. All life as one great whole comes within its rule, and thus any joy or comfort life can have here and now is bound up with the degree in which this principle is understood and applied to every action. All the sufferings of the present time are to be dealt with under the guidance it supplies.

Even those sufferings that men in their ignorance and self-indulgence bring upon themselves, and which are commonly held to be penal, and so the reaction or punishment of wrong-doing, may have a new and gracious meaning attached to them. If they are understood rightly they may be endured in a voluntary spirit for the securing of highest ends. The sufferer may suffer for the spread of knowledge, and for the clear realisation by all beholders of the importance of the observance of the laws of God, and of the laws of man, so far as they are in harmony with the Divine will. And those thousands who suffer innocently in the consequences of the wrong-doing of those wrong-doers may take up the very highest ground, even that held to be the aim of God revealed in Christ, for we know that "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance." And when the good see the amount of suffering bound to come, but in a wholly unnecessary way, and therefore preventable, will they not be influenced in a measure

beyond anything yet done to deal wisely with the conditions in which the young live, many of which are surely leading to evil ways and undone lives? Good men and women will feel that measures of prevention on the largest possible scale, to bring about a better world, will be required even at great cost and much suffering to themselves.

The principle of self-sacrifice is the reconciling principle in life on which the Christian revelation lays the utmost stress. For "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses." Blaming is removed, and sympathy becomes operative. It ceases to be mere pity, and becomes a supreme elevating force. Society can no longer be a penal force to punish the faults for which it is largely itself responsible. In his own striking way, often containing so much truth, Nietzsche says, "Devise me the justice which acquitteth every one except the judge." And how true it is that "in the moral world justice is not the highest law; love and self-sacrifice are higher still." The principle of the pound of flesh and the bond have been held up to everlasting opprobrium in Shakespeare, while mercy has been enshrined in highest praise.

And mercy is essentially self-sacrifice, for things cannot be put right by mere forgiveness or condonation. The forgiver, the shower forth of mercy, must be prepared to suffer for the man he forgives. Thus most truly the sufferings of the good have a redemptive value. "The sufferings of the righteous are the saving thing in human history." They do for others what Christ has done for men, and under the influence of

this doing they ever act. "Filled with the fragrance of Christ," as Pater remarked, "they seemed to have been touched with earthly perfumes."

And when St. Paul was referring to his great afflictions, he relates them to the sufferings of the whole body, saying, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." And he adds in another place, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." "As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also are ye of the consolation." The way in which the apostles speak of entering into the fellowship of suffering is altogether impressive. St. Peter writes, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to come upon you; but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." To St. Paul this glory is to be a personal experience. "For I reckon," he says, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Heavy though they be they are called a "light affliction," and that is viewed as working "for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." Doubtless in these verses the emphasis seems to be laid upon the glory of suffering as something wholly in the future. And, certainly, in all its fulness that glory is to be found in the heavenly state; but it is also true, and this thought is dwelt upon in the fourth gospel, that the glory is a present glad possession, filling up our experience and brightening all our days. We are not

to be eager to get away from suffering for good ends, but to rejoice in it, and to be willing to live on, even in the midst of sufferings, if we can increase the good of others. Here the song is to be learnt if it is ever to be sung; here the glad service is to be entered upon and lovingly pursued, if ever it is to be continued in the life that is to be crowned with all perfection. Honour will alone be given to the Master, to Whom we trace our salvation, not only by believing that He embodied in Himself the law of love to redeem mankind, but much more by translating into our lives that same law of love, that so we may become like Him, and more worthily represent Him among our fellows. He prayed that the glory He had might be given to His followers. When that glory becomes theirs, men reach the heights of life. They find themselves in line with the purpose of God, and become more ready to dwell with God for evermore in the realms of light and love and bliss.

The very special value of what Christ has thus taught the world about the essential meaning of suffering lies in the new values He has put upon life and all its possessions and experiences. Man is essentially a creator of values, and in so doing surmounts all previous valuations. By the abandonment of old valuations with their imperfect standpoints the race advances. This is its supreme prerogative, "to redeem what is past, and to transform every 'It was' into 'Thus would I have it.'"

Job was the type of the righteous man in suffering, and his sufferings were of the following sort. He had large possessions, and he lost them all. He had a happy home circle, but in a moment this was wholly

broken up. While, lastly, one who had previously enjoyed perfect health was overwhelmed by a painful and grievous bodily affliction. All forms of evil suddenly came upon him, and, being sorely perplexed in his mind, he was tempted to curse God and die.

Let us think upon the valuations put upon these sufferings in those early days, and contrast them with those now put upon such experiences by ourselves. The actual possession of material goods was held in high esteem, so that their loss was regarded as heavy affliction indeed. The value of life was measured by the amount of what a man possessed. But things are differently viewed now by the wise. The teaching of the Stoics and of Christ has led men increasingly to find the worth of life not in what men have, but in their capacity to use this; thus not in mere having, but in character, not in getting and in keeping, but in giving for the help of others. Hence men can learn that no suffering necessarily lies in the losing of their goods; nay, they can take "joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in themselves they have a better and an enduring possession." In this way life has ceased to be measured in terms of material things, and is held to lie in spiritual qualities. The man who complains of the loss of things in themselves alone has not yet learned the meaning of life.

The suffering caused by the removal of our dearest ones is always acute, but even here the true understanding of life taught us now enables the mind and heart to enter the "fellowship of suffering" with a new light illuminating the former darkness of life. Our dearest are with us to love and cherish that so we may do everything in

our power to make them glad and happy, and keep them with us as long as possible. Only too often they take their flight from our midst owing to preventable causes, and so they enter the martyr throng, who call on us by all the love we bore to them to be up and doing to remove these causes, and make life better for those who follow. They bid us see in their suffering an illustration of sacrifice, which we should accept and follow, as we live better lives ourselves. And when, after long and faithful service, our dear ones leave us, having thus fought a good fight, shall we not take up their unfinished tasks with joy, and look forward to a glad reunion at last?

In the same way we have been taught to take a new view of sickness. While it is no illusion but a great and sore affliction, we have seen how its causes can be traced, and its cure effected. In no case can it now be regarded as coming from God in some sudden and inscrutable way. As we have seen, every sick and suffering person is a challenge to us all to enter upon those crusades of prevention and healing that lie to our hand. The sufferings that now press upon us are not such as formerly pressed with heavy load upon men.

It is not ours to complain of loss of goods or of friends, or of bodily pain. These can be transvalued and so transfigured in the light of God and His truth made known to us. The sufferings now that often perplex and baffle the mind are those of a mental and moral kind, arising from the disappointments caused by the opposition of men to high endeavours for their good, and the small results of genuine self-sacrifice. The slow progress of the good in the world, and the

apparent indifference to the well-being of the world, are the things that cause our sufferings now. But even these can, as we have seen, disappear when we come to understand the essential principle on which God works, and in accordance with which everything is moving on to betterness.

The chief objection to self-sacrifice in every age, and especially in much modern literature, rests essentially on a fundamental misunderstanding of what true self-sacrifice means. The demand has been made for self-realisation, and rightly so. For all true self-realisation of man is accomplished by the way of self-sacrifice. It is only as we have continually sought to emphasise that self-sacrifice which is undertaken for some high end that has value or is in any way enjoined. It must not be negative, but wholly positive; never merely destructive, but altogether of a reconstructive kind. We are to reach the heights of the Divine by active measures of helpful service, and to find ourselves. The losing of ourselves is to be a losing of that which is selfish, lower, and transient, and in the surrender of all this nothing of worth is lost. In the securing of the good of others our own truest good is secured and preserved. The mystic in some ecstatic way identifies himself with the Divine, and so loses himself in its depths. The philosopher, in some abstract speculation upon the absorption of the Many in the One, loses himself in a similar way. The individual loses himself in no truly conscious manner to find himself. But by the way of love we realise our true personality as individuals. The joy of living on is made ours. For this is the word of the Master: "Whoever is willing to lose his life for My sake and

the gospel's," that is, for any high and worthy cause, "shall keep it unto life eternal."

> "No lesson can we learn with tears unshed,
> No blessing can we win with pain unknown,
> The meaning of our life is hidden deep
> In love alone."

We may not know at any moment all that is involved in a great act of love or self-sacrifice. Its inner significance may be beyond all telling, but however hard the task which love inspires and sets, the doer of such a task finds himself in fullest line with the Divine purpose of good for all mankind. To the hand of each of us the opportunity is ever near of improving and reshaping the conditions in which men have to live in the spirit of the Master, and so of giving to His principle of life ever higher and fuller expression.

# APPENDIX

## *THE BOOK OF JOB*

This Book has the following distinct divisions, each with its own explanation of suffering in the world.

These are (1) The Prologue in verse.
(2) The Cycle of Speeches.
(3) The Voice out of the Storm.
(4) The Contention of Elihu.
(5) The Epilogue in prose.

And the following are the suggested explanations in order:—

(1) In the Speeches of the Friends that all suffering is penal, and thus a punishment for wrong-doing.

(2) In the Epilogue that suffering is for a time, and that it ends in the restoration of the righteous sufferer.

(3) In the Voice out of the Storm suffering is declared to be a mystery which man can never understand.

(4) In the Prologue the contention of the writer is that suffering in the case of the innocent is a supreme Divine test.

(5) In the Contention of Elihu that suffering is a method of Divine discipline, and therefore remedial.

With the exception of the Prologue and the Epilogue, the whole book is written in Hebrew poetry on the principle of parallel couplets. These can be grouped in passages or strophes according to the subject matter. This principle helps towards the interpretation of difficult verses and the omission of third lines in many cases.

Two verses may be remarked upon. In chapter xiii., verse 15, the words are really not of trust in God, but of confidence in the speaker's own innocence. So also in chapter xix., verse 25, where we have a sublime assurance of the perfect vindication that is soon coming.

> "Full well I know my Vindicator lives!
> And that my Afterman shall stand upon my grave!
> He then shall fully testify for me,
> And lift His voice aloud on my behalf."

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